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## The role of creative drama in comprehending the legends environment related trainings: Kazdağı case study

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### Abstract

The aim of the activity which was implemented in the scope of a project supported by The Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey (STRCT) is to create awareness in MA students in the fields of nature, archeology, history and culture; to help them approach the concepts related to the culture and environment in the region they live by using a scientific manner and to create diverse points of views and different ideas by helping the participants to present and develop their social and critical thinking skills by way of drama and interactions in regions which were named after legends. The purpose of this study is to examine the attitudes of the participants towards the legends in terms of environment and cultural values and to identify their views. With this aim in mind, 60 MA students who participated in Ecology Based Environmental Education that took place in 2008 Summer term in Kazdağı National Park and its immediate vicinity were asked to replay (via drama) the artistic expressions of tragic love stories such as Hasan Boğuldu and Sarıkız legends of the Zeytinli vicinity of Edremit township in Balıkesir. The participants were also asked to individually represent the different ideas and formations in their minds by using a visual high print technology (linoleum). The study used a data collection method which relied on the beliefs, opinions, experiences, perceptions and feelings. Since the Kazdağları environment and cultural values were tried to be depicted in their natural atmosphere and formation, the study also carries qualitative characteristics. The data obtained by utilizing observation and interview techniques were categorized and studied in the directions of the subproblems in the study. The participants were informed about the legends of Hasan Boğuldu and Sarıkız through watching movies, reading texts and listening to speeches. Some parts of the texts were interrupted in the middle and drama technique was used. By using drama via group activities the process was perpetuated and the students were asked to express any location from the text by image sketches. The sketches that were created were developed by corroboratively discussing the events in the legends. The designs that were improved by each participant according to his/her text provided them to see the legend in its entirety. The participants found the chance of approaching the legends through different perspectives, expressing the legends through drama and print techniques (linoleum), imagining, dreaming and applying their imagination by feeling the satisfaction of observing the concept of creating the whole together and expressing themselves. By comprehending the place and significance of print pictures in the historical process, the students created a product that can render their experiences permanent and at the same time they had the opportunity to learn about the Hasan Boğuldu and Sarıkız legends by direct, hands-on experiences. The designs were presented both in a display and in the form of a booklet.

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## 1. Introduction

In addition to being a National Park, Kazdağları/ İda region holds a significant place as the rising asset of eco/culture tourism both in national and international arena. The rich diversity of flora and fauna of the region, its historical and mythological assets, colorful social and cultural life experiences have opened up these fantastic natural locations to numerous scientific activities and have gathered the nature and culture lovers together. Regional legends have passed from mouth to mouth and christened many places with their names. Surrounded by pine and magnolia trees and rocks that meet the sometimes silent sometimes raging streams, the mystical and enigmatic picnic area Hasanboğuldu in Kazdağları was named after the impossibility of the enormous love between Yörük Hasan and Türkmen girl Emine. Another legend that is remembered by the name of Kazdağları is the Sarıkız legend. The story of a girl herding geese while waiting for her father to return from Hajj at the outskirts of Kazdağı in Çamlıbel Village, her ill-founded and ungrounded denigration which caused the father to abandon her in Kazdağları and her subsequent achievement of supernatural spiritual powers in the cave where she continued living with her geese was the reason that the hills she lived by were named after her. These hills are still visited today and they help blend the geographical significance of the region with its cultural wealth and provide various diverse perspectives.

The most important and contemporary topic of our time is no doubt globalization. This topic is being discussed in national scientific circles in depth. The dimensions of the topic under focus are mostly economic. The cultural dimension is not stressed sufficiently. The cultural dimension also has diversity in itself such as art, law, education, morals and politics. The dimension of education is a part of cultural dimension. Undoubtedly, the dimension of education also shows variety such as higher education, secondary education, basic education and pre-school education etc. (Tezcan, 2002: 63). If considered from this angle, the important thing for the society and individuals that make up of this society is not where they stand as regards to globalization, but to have the skills and competencies that will help them in taking precautions regarding the potential results of the globalization process and in benefiting from these changes. For this reason, it should be aimed to create and develop individuals who can perceive the potential changes with foresight and who can keep abreast of them instead of creating individuals who are closed and resistant to change because of denial towards the concepts that have occurred with the reality of globalization. So, change should start its expansion starting with the educational institutions. According to Power (2000), the participation of individuals in the rapidly changing information society of the 21st century is only possible with the acquisition of new information and skills through lifelong learning and by being more qualified (Tezcan, 2002: 63). It is possible to state that the classical approaches to student education has started to lose their effect. In other words, in place of models that states the belief 'do as I say, do not do as I do', there is a need for new models that display sensitivity towards the lives of students who come from various cultural and social environments, that believe in the permanence and continuity of education and lifelong learning concept, that show an aptitude for group and collaborative work and that regards learning as a deep individual activity. The societies which invest in the development of concepts of culture and sensitivity perceptions and which makes these developments the aim of education and training make it possible for individuals to learn the ways for self-development. Whether it is accepted or not, young persons who can think, are creative, have team spirit, believe in themselves in the changing world, can define and describe values, comprehend the concept of ecological balance, purport to fight with fatalism and apathy, are sensitive towards the events surrounding them, are emphatic, can explicate the causes and reasons of events through different perspectives, can see the light in the horizon and can enlighten the other individuals are needed to be raised.

If the aim of education is to develop children in such a way that they can cope with problems and can be the driving force in improving the society, the education that is provided should be able to develop their potentials for creativity, self-confidence, initiative- taking, independent thinking, self-control and problem solving. In order to realize these aims, one of J.J.Rousseau's techniques, 'learning through experiences in the social and physical natural world' can be used. One of these aforementioned techniques is drama technique (Aral, 2000: 37). Just like prose, drama also uses scenarios (fiction) and characters, develops a plot, awakens feelings, releases humor. Sometimes drama is the power of interpretation of life and what it brings. But its most important characteristic is the fact that it

is written to be played, not to be read. The actors act more for themselves than for the audience. Each of these conditions has significant implications for the nature of drama (Beaty and Hunter, 1998: 909). Creative drama can be described as the widening of the life experiences without going on stage and without role playing according to Heatcote and Herbert, it is the field where thinking can be widened as much as possible according to O'Neill, it is a way of learning according to Nixon, and a universal art for all people according to McCaslin (Üstündağ, 2002: 15). According to San (San, 2002: 81) creative drama is the replay of an experience, an event, an idea, sometimes an abstract concept or a behaviour in 'gamelike' processes which review and give new meaning to the prior cognitive patterns in group work by using theatre techniques such as improvisation and role-plays or drama techniques. In addition to these definitions, the concept of creative drama is described as the acting of dramatic moments in game processes or life situations by an accompanying leader or expert with in-group interactions. This concept is effective in the learning experiences of the child and the adolescent, in activating their emotional experiences, power of imagination, symbolic thinking and in contributing to their efficient participation in learning processes.

Creative individuals are the ones who can see and perceive the environment and the world in multiple interactions in terms of the relations between shape and locations. It is especially important for an adolescent to experience the ways of behaviour and thinking of others, their sensitivities and experiences in order to shape his/her life in a more aware manner (Adıgüzel, 2002: 7).

The fact that the legends capture attention and facilitate learning cannot be denied. 'Ecology Based Environmental Education in Kazdağı National Park' Project, which is a long time host and facilitator for the region to be recognized and protected and which is supported by The Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey (STRCT) is one of the first and continuous projects in the region. Related to the main theme of this report, the aim of this activity undertaken in the scope of the project is to create awareness in MA students in the fields of nature, archeology, history and culture; to help them approach the concepts related to the culture and environment in the region they live by using a scientific manner and to create diverse point of views and different ideas by helping the participants to present and develop their social and critical thinking skills by way of drama and interactions in regions which were named after legends.

## **2. Results and Discussion**

2 groups of 60 MA and PhD students from various provinces of Turkey participated in 'Ecology Based Environmental Education in Kazdağı National Park' Project in August 2008. With the students participated in the first term program Hasanboğuldu legend was studied whereas with the students participated in the second term program the Sarıkız legend was under focus. In the work programme of 'Ecology Based Environmental Education in Kazdağı National Park' Project, field experts gave information on Hasanboğuldu and Sarıkız legends with audiovisual introductions by presenting a variety of perspectives (Geographical Location analysis; Abdullah Soykan and Yılmaz Arı, endemic flora types; Fatih Satıl, cultural resource values; Atilla Erden). The locations that the legends took place were used for field work, a multipurpose conference room was used for drama and an atelier was used for paint print work for both periods of the program that was repeated twice for 10 days periods. The legends were explained to the participants by program manager Abdullah Soykan on locations of Hasanboğuldu and Grave of Sarıkız by using the texts below without divulging how the legends ended. The study used a data collection method which relied on the beliefs, opinions, experiences, perceptions and feelings. Since the Kazdağları environment and cultural values were tried to be depicted in their natural atmosphere and formation, the study also carries qualitative characteristics. The data obtained by utilizing observation and interview techniques were categorized and studied in the directions of the subproblems in the study. The answers to the questions below were sought:

1. Are the perceptions and observations of the participants effective in acting the legends out?
2. Are the perceptions and observations of the participants effective in visually representing the legends?
3. Are there similarities among the physical and pictorial representations participants expressed their perceptions and observations?

### 2.1. Legend of Hasanboğuldu

At the end of the 1800s, Wednesdays were the market day for Edremit. All the villagers in the region would come to Edremit on Wednesday, would sell their goods and buy their needs. The beautiful Emine of Yüksekoba, a village made up of tents from animal hair in the skirts of Sarıkız Peak about 1500 metres high in Kazdağı, also had come to the market in such a day and her eyes had met the eyes of the handsome fellow from Zeytinli Village. From that day on, every Wednesday the young persons in love started to meet. Emine would sell the milk, cheese and honey which she brought after a travel of five hours to Hasan and would buy the vegetables she needed from him. On the way back from the market, they were walking to Zeytinli Village together at which point Emine would take off alone to return to her own nomads by walking for four hours in the very rough mountain road. The young girl and boy decided to get married. The idea that Hasan would move to the nomadic village to live with his wife's family was considered and his mother, who raised her son without a father accepted that option just to see her son happy although she would then be all by herself. But Emine's family was against the marriage. As a result of the persistence of the young girl and the boy, Emine's family decided to try out Hasan's strength in rough mountain conditions. If he could be successful in this exam, the young bous of the nomadic village who also wanted to marry Emine would also accept brave Hasan. Hasan said goodbye to his mother and shouldered the approximately 60 kilo salt sack on his way to the nomadic village with Emine. They were facing a 4-hour arduous mountain travel. One hour after they set out when they reached Beyoba village, the salt sack had started to burn Hasan's back. In the second hour of their journey they reached Sutüven Falls. Since the road was covered by the water at some points, hasan was jumping from rock to rock which made his legs shaky. When they reached Gökbüvet, Hasan slumped to the ground. Emine was trying to encourage him and hasan was offering her to elope to a different land. But Emine was strict, she had a promise that she had given to her father. She shouldered the sack and started to head for the nomadic village. She did not listen to Hasan's begging... 'Do not leave me, I cannot come to your village and I cannot go back to mine!!!!:' she just walked on... When she reached her nomadic village, she was remorseful. It was already dark' .....(Azatoğlu, 2007: 169)"

Drama teacher Arzu Bayındır gave directions to the participants to pretend to walk inside the river by jumping from rock to rock as if carrying a 60 kilo load on their backs. Later, participants were divided into 5 groups of 6 and they were asked to act out the end of the legend with an end they have chosen according to their own perspectives.

In these role plays,

The 1st group role played that Emine eloped with Hasan,

The 2nd group role played that Emine was tricked

The 3rd group role played that Emine committed suicide thinking that hasan was dead.

The 4th group role played that Emine went crazy by Hasan's love and walked the Kazdağları

The 5th group role played that Emine forgot Hasan and married someone else from her own nomadic village.

In the assessment activity after the roleplay, Emine and Hasan were described and they were attributed physical and personal characteristics. Emine was said to be a headstrong girl of about 17, who was fearless, in love and proud. She wore local clothes, she was robust with large round features. Hasan was about 20, sturdy, tall like Emine. He had a little pot belly but otherwise slim. He was in love, proud, hard working and bashful. In the atelier task, the whole legend was told again prior to the print technique and a blackboard was used to list Emine and hasan's characteristics. Also, the feelings that the legend evoked in the participants (hope, waiting, betrayal, love, undying love, helplessness, sadness etc) were listed and the participants were asked to sketch symbolically either a process or a location from the text that they have experienced via the drama method group activities. The designed sketches were compared to the events in the legend and developed through collaborative discussions. The designs that were improved by each participant according to his/her text provided them to see the legend in its entirety.

### 2.2. Legend of Sarıkız

Sarıkız, who lived at the outskirts of Kazdağı in Çamlıbel village, gave all her love to her father since the time her mother died and never thought of getting married and leaving her beloved father all alone. She was a tall, pretty girl with blond hair like gold. The young boys of the village and from the vicinity were fascinated by her. She was a quick girl who was very brave. Her father had gone on the Hajj journey which was to last for months. In that time period, the young guys and their families who could not manage to take Sarıkız falsely accused her of indecency and

impurity. After all these words, her father had to kill her according to the customs when he got back. He could not clean this blemish on his honour if he ran away to other land, he could not erase it even if he took his own life. When her father said ‘Sarı kız, take your geese, let's walk up to the prairie.....(Azatoğlu, 2007: 171).

The legend was told to the students by Tahtakuşlar Ethnography Museum owner Alibey Kudar at the museum and by the project manager Abdullah Soykan at the site of the grave of Sarı kız.

Drama teacher Arzu Bayındır gave directions to the participants and first had them play the game ‘Gordian's Knot’. Later the participants were divided into 5 groups of 6 and they were asked to act out the end of the legend with an end they have chosen according to their own perspectives.

In these role plays,

The 1st group attributed Sarı kız supernatural powers,

The 2nd group role played that Sarı kız eloped with her lover,

The 3rd group role played that Sarı kız obtained supernatural powers and fought the persons who falsely accused her

The 4th group role played that Sarı kız was left on the mountain by her father and died

The 5th group role played that the father of Sarı kız came to believe that he made a terrible mistake by not trusting his daughter and went back to apologize.

In the assessment activity after the role-play, Sarı kız, her father and the geese were described. Sarı kız was described as about 15 years old, tall and blond, slim, brave, quiet and calm, dressed in white and blue-eyed. Her father was described to be about 50 years old, tall, thin and sturdy and proud. The geese were 5-7, large white geese.

In the atelier task, the whole legend was told again prior to the print technique and a blackboard was used to list characteristics of Sarı kız and her father. Also, the feelings that the legend evoked in the participants (waiting, gossip, slander, resignation, spiritual feelings, supernatural feelings, love, helplessness, death, hope, etc) were listed and the participants were asked to sketch symbolically either a process or a location from the text that they experienced via the drama group activities. The designed sketches were compared to the events in the legend and developed through collaborative discussions. The designs that were improved by each participant according to his/her text provided them to see the legend in its entirety.

The participants found the chance of approaching the legends through different perspectives, expressing the legends through drama and print techniques (linoleum), imagining, dreaming and applying their imagination by feeling the satisfaction of observing the concept of creating the whole together and expressing themselves.

By comprehending the place and significance of print pictures in the historical process, the students created a product that can render their experiences permanent and at the same time they had the opportunity to learn about the Hasan Boğuldu and Sarı kız legends by direct, hands-on experiences. The designs were presented both in a display and in the form of a booklet

The fact that the perceptions and observations of the participants are effective in recreating legends are evident both in drama activities and in pictures created by linoleum print technique (the print dresses decorated with olive branches, the tree figures, the physical characteristics of the local people, their behaviors, clothing etc). When the drama activities and pictures created by print technique work were examined it was seen that there is a consistency in the physical and pictorial expressions of perceptions and observations among participants.

## Suggestions

The fact that creative drama technique in education was discovered during the process of globalization cannot be a simple coincidence. The results of the social and cultural changes; immigration, competitive environment, the changes in the family structure, TV, population growth etc. make it necessary for us to raise our children as individuals who comprehend the interaction between cultures and nations, assimilate the cultural values as a nation, respect different cultural values, have the qualifications to benefit from these changes in the maximum capacity, have the aptitude to work in groups collaboratively and cooperatively and are sensitive to the natural environment that they live in. In order to protect the environment, first you need to love it; in order to love it, you need to know it and in order to know it, you need to think and investigate, share responsibilities and participate in the solutions. The basic aim of the environmental educator should be to activate this process (Şimşekli, 2001: 1)

In this context;

The socio-cultural dimensions of environmental education should not be overlooked. The existence of flora and fauna of regions, historical and mythological assets, colorful social and cultural life experiences should be regarded as a whole in order to create permanence in forming awareness in societies.

Individuals are attached to their pasts. Mythological history and legends have always been interesting. Many legends and stories told by using past perfect mode have been transferred through generations. The locations related to the legends have been protected since they address our feelings. When reexamining the causes and results in environmental education we should make use of legends and we should make it possible to create permanent anecdotes by drama technique. In our country, the work undertaken in the field of environmental education is not sufficient neither at universities nor at pre-university levels. The matter of education should be given priority, and environment education program should be applied starting from primary school. Creative drama should be given a place in these educations. Teachers should talk about environmental issues in every class (not just science classes) with the methods they choose by themselves (such as creative drama) and should motivate the students in that direction. Coordination should be maintained among schools and collective Project work should be undertaken. Current 'Ecology Based Environmental Educations' should be continued with support.

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