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## Creative drama: Can it be used to nursing education

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### Abstract

This study was conducted in order to assess the impact of drama education, which is supposed to improve creativity skills, on nursing students. In this study, which was designed as an experimental one, third year students studying at Nursing Department of Duzce University School of Health were given drama education for one hour a week for eight weeks in total. In order to measure the creativity levels of the students in drama education in the study, Torrance Test of Creative Thinking Figural and Verbal Forms were applied as pre- and post-tests. According to the findings of the study, there was a significant difference between the pre-test and post-test in only originality subscale in the verbal form and in fluency, originality and elaboration subscales in the figural form and creativity levels in these areas increased following the drama education. Including a drama course and active learning methods is considered to be significant for coming up with solutions for the existing problems in nursing education.

**Keywords:** Creativity, drama, education, nursing, nursing education.

### Introduction

Creativity is a concept that is associated with innovation and practicality and defined with several other concepts (e.g. personality, intelligence, etc.) (Batey, Furnham, Safullina 2010). Today, however, there is no certain description of creativity. There are some differences about the definitions of creativity between the theoreticians and researchers. Theoreticians define creativity as a trait of individuals, processes and environment. Psychologists, educational scientists and neuroscientists, on the other hand, focus more on other individual traits that highlight the importance of personality, neurophysiology and creativity of the individual (Orme 2010). One of the most outstanding descriptions of creativity, the Torrance test (1968), defines creativity as the ability to be sensitive for problems, disorders lack of knowledge, lost of objects and lack of harmony; to identify the difficulty, seek solutions, make inferences or develop relevant trials

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concerning the shortcomings; to revise or retest these trials and then to come up with the right conclusion.

Improving creative thinking, which already exists in all human beings, and employing it in every area is significant for overcoming a number of problems. One of the most fluent and easy to remember ways of thinking when we consider the methods of processing raw data and coming up with solutions is creative thinking. Improving creative thinking ability is regarded to be an important objective in all educational stages in Turkey from the primary school to the university (MEB 2010).

Like all other sectors in a rapidly changing and developing world, health sector is undergoing swift changes. Therefore, requirements in health sector are increasing and new strategies are needed in order to adapt to the changing environment. Creativity strategies and techniques play a key role in preparing nursing profession for the future and raising individuals with creative thinking skills (Gültaş 2009). As a problem solving process nursing principally aims to provide care for people in a scientific, holistic and creative way and developing creative thinking in nursing is really important. Drama seems to be an effective method in having students acquire these skills.

Creative drama involves a range of activities aimed at reconstructing events, phenomena, experiences and facts (San 1996). Drama is an instructional method, which helps individuals develop themselves in multi-dimensions by empathizing with others, be active in educational and instructional processes, be able to express themselves, be creative, perceive life from many perspectives, be keen on research and on learning as opposed to the fact of education is getting dull and non-productive (Özdemir and Çakmak 2008, Ormancı and Ören 2010). Drama is an educational method that covers student-centered and humanistic approaches. Learning is centered on individual development and improvement in this method, in which teachers act as guides for students. By means of the drama activities to be employed in nursing education, there will be meaningful learning experiences in caregiving domain and students will be able to reflect their feelings and thoughts during their caregiving experiences (Ekebergh 2004). At the same time critical thinking which is important in nursing applications can be improved via drama activities (Chan 2012, Creative Arts and Humanities in Healthcare 2014)

In summary, it could be suggested that students may acquire individual development, self-awareness and professional skills thanks to the drama activities to be used in nursing education (Wasytko and Sticklely 2003). Therefore, this study was planned in order to determine nursing students' creative thinking levels, to assess the effect of creative drama course in the curriculum on their creativity levels and to come up with necessary recommendations for the curriculum

## METHOD

### Research Aim

The aim of this research is to determine the effect of drama education on nursing students' creativity considering the general acknowledgement in the relevant literature that everybody possesses it and it can be improved.

### Research Design

The research is a quasi-experimental study and it was carried out by using one-group pre-test post-test design. This research design was chosen because there was no homogeneous student group.

### Sample and Population

The research population consisted of third year nursing students taking 'Creative Drama' as an elective course in a health school of a state university in 2009–2010 academic year. No sampling method was applied because the researchers planned to reach the entire research universe. A total of 36 students were involved in the study and all of them wanted to participate in the study voluntarily. However, one student was excluded from the study population since she was not present in the classroom on the day and at the time of implementation and no pre-test was applied with her.

The creative drama course was given a lecturer who has got drama specialty and Torrance Test. The lecturer had decided that course topics, scenarios, references, solutions of problems in scenarios and scale before course. Case studies, dramatization, scenarios and role cards were used during 8 weeks.

### Data Collection Tools

The "Torrance Test of Creative Thinking (TTCT)" was employed as the data collection instrument in this study because it directly measured creativity. Having been applied first in 1966 the United States of America, the Torrance test of creative thinking can be applied with pre-school, high-school and university students. The test comprises a "verbal" test and a "figural" test. It has a total of 10 sub-tests; seven in the verbal part and three in the figural part. The subscales of the test are consist of fluency, originality, flexibility, abstractness of title, elaboration, resistance to premature closure (Aslan 2001). The entire duration of the test is approximately 75–80 minutes and scoring it per person also takes about the same duration.

### Data Collection Procedure

This study was conducted with approval of the administration of the school where the implementation would be carried out. Then the students were informed about the aim of the study and asked whether they would volunteer to participate in the study or not. Any of the students did not refuse to participate in the study.

### Data Analysis

The answers given by the students to Torrance Test of Creative Thinking (TTCT) were scored and collected in computer by an expert also involved in Turkish standardization of TTCT. Descriptive statistics and paired t-test were employed to analyze the research data.

### Limitations

It was seen as limitation that wasn't used control group. But creative drama course was chosen only one class and semester.

## FINDINGS

### Findings about Socio-Demographic Characteristics

Among the 35 students, who made up the study population, 82% (n:29) were female, 17,1% (n:6) were male, the mean age was  $22,1 \pm 1,52$ , 79,4% (n: 27) had graduated from high school with a cumulative grade point average of  $2,43 \pm 0,33$ .

### Findings about Creativity

The scores received by the nursing students before and after the drama education are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1. Nursing Students' Creativity Levels Before and after Creative Drama Course**

	CREATIVITY SUBSCALES			t	p <sup>c</sup>
		Pre-Test <sup>a</sup>	Post-Test <sup>b</sup>		
		X ± SD	X ± SD		
VERBAL FORM	Fluency	32,17 ± 10,31	34,20 ± 14,08	-,905	,372
	Flexibility	19,66 ± 5,73	18,11 ± 5,51	1,510	,140
	Originality	17,57 ± 8,49	21,20 ± 10,28	<b>-2,240</b>	<b>,032</b>
FIGURAL FORM	Fluency	14,17 ± 5,90	22,17 ± 8,18	<b>-6,308</b>	<b>,000</b>
	Originality	9,49 ± 4,47	16,26 ± 7,96	<b>-5,265</b>	<b>,000</b>
	Abstractness of titles	4,71 ± 4,38	4,46 ± 4,69	,278	,783
	Elaboration	9,43 ± 2,52	10,54 ± 3,10	<b>-2,206</b>	<b>,034</b>
	Resistance to premature closure	,69 ± 1,34	,60 ± 1,09	,373	,711
	List of Creative Forces Total	8,29 ± 8,06	9,23 ± 12,38	-,429	,671

<sup>a</sup>Pre-test, <sup>b</sup>Post-test, <sup>c</sup>Significance Level.

A general examination of the difference among the subscales in the verbal form indicated a significant difference between the pre- and post-tests in originality subscale. In the figural form, on the other hand, a significant difference was identified between the pre- and post-tests in fluency, originality, abstractness of titles and elaboration subscales (Table 1).

## DISCUSSION

This study investigated the effect of creative drama course offered to nursing students on their creativity levels. The findings indicated a significant difference in fluency, originality and elaboration subscales of creativity.

While there was not a significant difference in the fluency subscale, which indicated an increase in the number of opinions about facts/situations, in the verbal form after creative drama course, the students learnt how to come up with different ways to solve their problems and there was a quantitative increase in the ideas coming out. In the figural form, on the other hand, the increase of the fluency and production of ideas of the students after creative drama course in the originality and elaboration subscales was found to be significant. It could therefore be suggested that the drama activities performed for eight weeks proved to be more effective on the students' figural creativity. An experimental study by Karataş and Özcan (2010), which was conducted with creative thinking activities, found that there were significant differences among TTCT subscales for fluency, originality, elaboration, flexibility and total creativity scores in favor of the test group educated with creative thinking activities. The increase in the fluency subscale after creative drama course is considered to be vital for a problem-solving-oriented profession like nursing. If the alternative ways to solve problems increase, individuals will be disturbed less by problems because they will try different solution ways and manage to carry out the necessary intervention in the early period and achieve satisfaction. Therefore, developing the fluency subscale is vital and it is considered to influence nurses' professional and personal lives directly and in a positive way.

It was found that there was a significant increase after creative drama course in the originality subscale covered both in the verbal and figural forms. Originality indicates that the produced ideas are detailed, meticulous and authentic. Nursing is a profession whose members often face many problems individually and personally (Bilazer et.al 2008). It is considered that producing and implementing original ideas about these problems reduce the amount of the stress faced and therefore increase job satisfaction. This significant change of nursing students observed after creative drama course was regarded as a remarkable finding in that they were open to new ideas and development and this aspect of them could be improved by means of education.

Considering the fact that nursing is a stressful occupation, it is vital that nursing students gain this kind of experiences during their education, which functions as the first step of their preparation for the profession.

Another significant difference was identified in the elaboration subscale of the Figural form following creative drama course. By means of the activities carried out in creative course, the nursing students in the study improved new perspectives and skills to produce alternative solution ways for a new event/situation. Today nurses have to think critically so that they can maintain lifelong learning, improve themselves professionally, collaborate with others efficiently, achieve the desired goals, change the society and improve intercultural reality. A prerequisite of critical thinking is adopting wide and varied perspectives. In this sense, the increase in the nursing students' elaboration skills following creative drama course is considered to yield an increase in their critical thinking skills. Considering the fact that critical thinking promotes nurses' intellectual skills such as making decisions independently and providing efficient caregiving and it improves their ability to perform analysis/synthesis, to set up cause-effect relationships, to think faster on induction-deduction basis and to interpret situations (Uçan, Taşçı, Ovayolu 2008), it could be suggested that creative drama course can provide students with opportunities to acquire these skills during their education.

Finally, it was found that the students' creative thinking level increased following the eight-week creative drama programme offered to the nursing students taking drama education. In nursing profession, which is considered to be a problem-solving process, individuals who are not creative may often develop feelings of weakness and behaviors of withdrawal and disapprobation. Therefore, it is considered that instead of traditional methods which are based on transferring knowledge, nursing education curriculum should include more student-centered methods such as drama activities, multiple intelligence theory and active learning strategies (e.g. six thinking hats, demonstration, etc.) to promote their creativity (Gökdoğan F, 2003).

## **CONCLUSION and RECOMMENDATIONS**

Creativity, which actually exists in every person, is one of the higher order thinking skills and there are many environmental factors affecting creativity. This study highlights the need for creative thinking in educational system. It is possible to improve creativity by integrating creative thinking into curriculum beginning from pre-school stage till university level. Considering the fact that creativity is a notion which can be improved through education, it is recommended that creative drama course is included in nursing education so that creative solutions to problems can be found easily in preparation for nursing profession, which is regarded to be a stressful occupation. In

addition to this, it is vital that educators responsible for teaching nursing students enrich the curriculum by employing both drama techniques and active learning strategies in their lessons.

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