The relationship between arts education, museum education and drama education in elementary education

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Abstract

The Ministry of Education has taken a radical step and adopted the constructivist approach in elementary education since 2005. According to this approach, education is given in student-centered, experience based, multiple communication and learning environments and assessed in cognitive, affective and motor dimensions. In the Ministry of Education elementary school curriculum, the fields of art, museum and drama education are included as compulsory elective courses or instructional methods. Visual arts education and music education curricula (grades 1-8) were revised, and artistic activities (grades 1-8) were included as a course in the curriculum. Drama and museum education exist within these courses as a field or instructional method.

The aim of this study is to establish how the fields of art, museum or drama are covered in visual arts education (grades 1-8), music education (grades 1-8), and artistic activities (grades 1-8) as an instructional method or course. It is a survey type study. The study will involve an examination of visual arts, music and artistic activities curricula and guidebooks for grades 1 through 8, as well as weekly class hours decided by the Ministry of Education. Content analysis will be used for the analyses.

As a second dimension, visual arts, class and drama compulsory / elective course teachers (5 teachers in total) were interviewed to establish the situation about the practical problems in the fields of drama, art and museum education. The interviews were recorded and evaluated by using qualitative research techniques. It was attempted that to identify both curricular and practical problems in the fields of art, museum and drama education at the elementary level.© 2010 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

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1. Introduction

The field of arts education in elementary education is as important as the other subjects (education of social sciences, science and technology and mathematics etc. In arts education, improvement of the eye through visual arts, the ear through music, gestures and mimics through theatre and drama and the language through literature are aimed.

Arts education is an important part of modern education as a means of a tool and an aim. When students come across various fields and examples of art, they get accustomed to various forms of expression, understand the language of various art forms, and develop sensitivity towards aesthetic values (MEB, 2006). The objective of arts,
museum and drama education given in elementary schools is to improve creative and critical thinking (Gartenhaus, 2000).

In elementary education, museum education can serve the function of a purpose for arts education and as a means for the teaching of other subjects. According to a museum educator, the content of the teaching at school can be abstract phenomena that the students have never encountered or experienced. On the other hand, at museums, students can see, touch, smell, hold the tools and use the equipments. Museum education supports learning through senses and experiences (Seidel and Hudson, 1999).

Through drama, children can improve their social, communication and empathic skills and learn how to express themselves and they may also learn how to express their feelings more effectively by using their bodies. In addition, drama may help students to improve multiple viewpoints and their critical thinking skills.

1. Arts Education in the Elementary School Programs of the Ministry of National Education

There are already some required and elective courses in the elementary school curriculum including drama, museum, and arts. Visual Arts Education (VAE) and music courses are included as compulsory and art activities course (AAC) is elective.

Visual arts education and music courses are given at grades 1-3, 2 hours in a week, and 1 hour for grades 4-8, respectively. Art activities course is 1 hour per week for grades 1-3 and 2 hours for grades 4-8, respectively. Museum education is included in both visual arts courses and art activities courses. Drama education is emphasized within the context of AAC as an important teaching method.

In the elective art activities course, after the fundamental knowledge of art education is given, depending on the students’ preferences and talents and physical capacities and resources of the school, one of the activities from such as drama, theatre, folk dances, musical instruments, painting, photography, sculpture (TTKB, 2006). AAC can be taken one or two hours per week and music courses can be taken from 4 to 8 grades for two hours in a week (TTKB, 2006).

The basic learning fields of AAC are arts education, museum culture, and project works. In grades 1-5, drama and in grades 6-8, theatre is used as a teaching method. No special attention is paid to any specific field of art, and students are allowed to perform in different fields of art and encouraged to improve themselves from cultural and aesthetic aspects. The themes of the program are folk tales, emotions, nature, human and arts, cuisine and culture, legends, heroes and communication (MEB, 2006).

The objectives of VAE is to enable students to get to know the cultural heritage, to improve visual perception, imagination, and sense of getting pleasure from the works of art, and to help them understand the language of the works of art and like them (MEB, 2006).

The purposes of VAE are to have students make visual arts productions and increase awareness of museum and visual arts in students, encourage them to get to know the Anatolian civilizations and protect them.

Within the framework of VAE, students do activities allowing them to express their feelings and opinions in the different fields of fine arts, establish a museum inside the class, establish an ethnography museum, prepare a museum board, set up a museum corner and print coins.

2. Method

In the present study the relationships between arts, drama and museum education in the elementary education were investigated employed. A qualitative research design was used. Semi-structured interview was made with two teachers and teachers were gave open-ended emphatic feedback. One drama and one arts teacher having work experience ranging from 6 years to 20 years and working in elementary schools in the low and middle socio economic classes attended the study.

The teachers were interviewed one by one. With the consent of the interviewees, the interviews were recorded with a recorder and the researcher took some notes during the interviews. Following the interviews, the transcriptions of sound recordings and notes were made. The interviews were carried out within January, 2010.
3. Data Analysis

For the analysis of the data, content analysis was employed. The interviews were recorded with a recorder then transcribed. The coding was performed according to categories and themes. Then codes and themes were formed and thus, the data were categorized (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2005).

4. Reliability and Validity

In terms of the content of the study, the consistency of the study findings and whether they form a meaningful unity was investigated. For the external validity, it is believed that the study has some limitations concerning the followings: the limited number of the participants, schools represented from all the socio economic classes, school types, grades. The present study is limited to the study group. More interviews are needed to be able to generalize the findings.

For the reliability of the study, two different researchers were asked to code the data (sound recordings, transcriptions, written notes). It was concluded that the researchers ended up with similar codes and themes and the study is reliable.

5. Findings and Suggestions

The basic question of the study is how the participants use of arts, drama and museum education in the elementary education. The themes used in the study were named as visual arts education course (VAEC), art activities-drama course (AADC), and the other courses given in elementary education (OCEE). Each theme was divided into the categories of art, museum, drama.

Within the theme of visual arts education course, following results within the subcategories of museum, drama and art were obtained:

In the category of museum; it was found that activities such as trips to museums, making research about museums via internet, using the computer lab to get information about museums, trips to around museums, examining Europe museums are done.

In the category of arts; it was found that activities such as making discussions about the favorite artists following a visit to arts museum, listening to music while painting, making sculpture with plastcine and listening to music with different ethncial backgrounds and dancing are done.

In the category of drama; it was found that some improvisations are occasionally performed.

Within the framework of VAEC, it was found that strong connections are made between museum and arts education but very little connections are made with drama. Within the theme of arts activities course, following results within the subcategories of museum, drama and art were obtained:

In the museum category; it was found that drama activities are performed in museums and it was determined that the importance of museum in drama education was understood by the teachers and the students. Students designed a toy museum in their schools.

In the arts category; drawings are performed following a visit to a museum and products of famous painters were examined by the children.

In the drama category; it was found that museum trip was made focusing drama. It was observed that students and teachers were highly willing to participate in the activities, and drama was used to improve social skills and communications skills.

In the art activities course, it can be argued that profound emphasis was put on drama and museum relationship, but arts education was partially emphasized.

Under the theme of OCEE, when we look at the category of drama, we see that the classroom teachers used drama for encouraging the positive behaviors of students and to improve reading and writing skills, in the category of museum, it was determined that teachers could not spent time for museum visits and limited number of activities were performed, in the category of arts, it was determined that free drawing was allowed in arts courses or arts course was not made. Within the framework of OCEE, due to various concerns of teachers (reading and writing education), particularly at lower grades, not much importance was given to the relationships between arts, museum and drama.
6. Conclusion

In the light of the results of the study, in the visual arts education course (VAEC), enough attention was paid to museum education but very few drama activities were performed, however in the new elementary curriculum, teaching museum culture and historical heritage are included.

Arts activities course is given as an elective course in the elementary school. In this course, museum education is included as an important learning area and drama is used as an important teaching method. With the drama communication and interaction are increased. In the study, it was found that in the field of museum education, important drama activities were performed but no importance was given for arts education.

Moreover, it was seen that drama and museum activities were not much emphasized in other courses given in elementary education. If the classroom teacher is experienced in the fields of drama and museum education, a lot of activities can be carried out. It was concluded that arts, museum and drama education relationship only set by the teachers experienced in this field.

Resources

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