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**THE EFFECT OF CREATIVE DANCING
THE EMPATHETIC TENDENCY OF PROSPECT MUSIC
TEACHERS**

*YARATICI DANSIN MÜZİK ÖĞRETMENİ ADAYLARININ EMPATİK EĞİLİMLERİ
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DEÜ Buca Eğitim Fakültesi Güzel Sanatlar Eğitimi Bölümü Müzik Eğitimi Anabilim Dalı

Abstract

Music education as well as other branches of art plays an important role in the development of sensitivity, creativity and sense of aesthetics, which contribute to the quality of the individual. The development of these qualities as well of the musical potential can be realized in a free and creative class atmosphere free from oppression and tension, where positive emotions reign. The establishment of such an ambiance is closely related to the ability of the music teachers to empathize and communicate with their pupils without conflict. The course of "Play-Dance-and-Music" found in the music teacher training program and based mainly on creative dancing, which aims especially at the achievement of learning to use body language effectively, represents important dynamics which will allow the development of prospect music teachers' empathy and communication skills. In this concept the purpose of this research study is to investigate the effect of creative dancing on the empathetic tendency of prospect music teachers. This research study was realized using a single group pretest-posttest experimental design. Research subjects consist of 29 4th-year students studying in Dokuz Eylül University (located in Izmir, Turkey) Buca Faculty of Education Department of Fine Arts Education Division of Music Education in Fall Semester 2009-2010. Data collection was carried out using the "Empathetic Tendency Scale" by Dökmen. The scale was applied before and

after the experiment period of 14 weeks during which two hours were devoted to creative dancing activities per week. The points scored by the subjects before and after the experiment in the "Empathetic Tendency Scale" exhibit a meaningful difference in favour of posttest measurements ($p<.001$). According to this finding, it can be stated that creative dancing has a meaningful effect on the empathetic tendency of prospect music teachers.

Key Words: Music teacher training, play-dance-and-music, creative dancing, empathetic tendency.

Öz

Müzik eğitimi diğer sanat eğitimi dallarıyla birlikte nitelikli bireylerin yetiştirilmesinde etken olan müzikal duyarlılığın, yaratıcılığın ve estetik duyguların gelişiminde önemli bir rol oynar. Müzikal potansiyelin yanı sıra bu niteliklerin geliştirilmesi, olumlu duyguların hakim olduğu, baskı ve gerginlikten uzak, özgür ve yaratıcı bir sınıf ortamında mümkündür. Böyle bir ortamın oluşturulması da müzik öğretmenlerinin öğrencileriyle anlaşmazlığa düşmeden, empati ve iletişim kurabilme becerileri ile yakından ilgilidir. Müzik Öğretmenliği Programı'nda yer alan, ağırlıklı olarak yaratıcı dansa dayalı olan ve özellikle beden dilinin etkin bir şekilde kullanılmasının hedeflendiği "Oyun-Dans-Müzik" dersi, müzik öğretmeni adaylarının empati kurma ve iletişim becerilerini geliştirmelerini sağlayacak önemli dinamikleri içerir. Bu bağlamda, bu çalışmada yaratıcı dansın öğretmen adaylarının empatik eğilimleri üzerindeki anlamlı düzeyde etkisi olup olmadığının ortaya konması amaçlanmıştır. Araştırmada tek grup öntest-sontest modeli kullanılmıştır. Araştırma Dokuz Eylül Üniversitesi (İzmir, Türkiye) Buca Eğitim Fakültesi Güzel Sanatlar Eğitimi Bölümü Müzik Eğitimi Anabilim Dalı'nda 2009-2010 güz döneminde eğitim gören 4. sınıf öğrencileri ($n=29$) ile gerçekleştirilmiştir. Veriler Dökmen tarafından geliştirilen "Empati Eğilim Ölçeği" ile toplanmıştır. Ölçek haftada ikişer saat yaratıcı dans aktivitelerini kapsayan 14 haftalık periyodun öncesinde ve sonrasında uygulanmıştır. Empatik Eğilim Ölçeği'nin öntest ve sontestinden alınan puanlar arasında sontest lehine anlamlı farklılık bulunmuştur ($p<.001$). Bu bulguya göre yaratıcı dansın öğretmen adaylarının empatik eğilimleri üzerinde anlamlı bir etkisi olduğu söylenebilir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Müzik öğretmeni eğitimi, oyun-dans ve müzik, yaratıcı dans, empati eğilimi

Introduction

Art education, together with scientific and technical education which complement and support it, provides the groundwork over which qualified individuals can be brought up and a quality society can be formed. In the field of art, as in all fields, the teacher plays an important role in the effectiveness of the education in itself and in the realization of the educational objectives. "The realization of the

objectives of the education depends on the effectiveness of the teaching processes, which, in turn, depend to a great extent on the teacher and on what he/she achieves in the teaching environment," (Açıkgöz, 1992 p.1)

One of the general educational objectives of music education which is one of the main branches of art education is training creative and sensitive individuals with a sense of aesthetics. Music education realizes these general objectives through specific objectives which develop the musical potential of the students. The effectiveness of the education of an abstract art such as music requires a free and creative class atmosphere free from oppression and tension, where positive emotions reign. Açıkgöz (2007) emphasizes the importance of a class environment where positive feelings reign and of an understanding, compassionate, accepting and helpful attitude adopted by the teacher in the formation of creative students who feel valued, think and learn. The establishment of a positive class environment is closely related to the ability of the music teachers to empathize and communicate with their pupils without conflict.

Communication, defined as a psychosocial process that interrelates two people, starts with their taking notice of one another. This process runs over numerous channels, of which every sensory organ is one. People continuously give the person in front of them and the people around them messages with their gaze, their voice tone, their facial expressions and gestures. The harmony between the communication channels is also interpreted as an indicator of a person's mental health (Cüceloğlu, 2006). It is important for all of one's relationships both in one's daily life and in one's professional life that this multichannel process functions well. The importance of communication is even greater in professions like teaching where one needs to communicate with numerous individuals.

For a teacher, the importance of the communication process to function well is two fold. In the first place, healthy communication makes the students feel at ease in the learning environment, get motivated to learn and develop a positive attitude towards the teacher. In the second place, the teacher can get professional satisfaction in a genuine learning environment free from communication conflicts, he/she finds meaning in his/her job and works in elation.

Cüceloğlu (2006), who claims that a human being is a huge potential, evaluates the subject from a teacher-student relationship perspective. The teachers who are aware of their students' being potentials to be developed raise individuals who think, question, are not afraid of making mistakes and see the mistakes they make as natural steps on their way to success. This makes the children feel valued and powerful. On the other hand, a teacher who is not aware of the child's being a potential thinks that his main duty is to have the child commit some information to memory. This

evaluation of Cüceloğlu is closely related to the communication process' functioning well.

It can be stated that healthy communication provides the basis for empathetic understanding. Empathy, defined as a person's understanding another's feelings and thoughts correctly by putting themselves in their shoes, has got three components (Dökmen, 2008):

- Putting oneself in the other party's shoes, looking at the situation from their perspective
- Understanding the other party's feelings and thoughts correctly
- Letting the other party know that one understands their feelings and thoughts correctly, giving an empathetic response.

Individuals value and try to understand and accept one another thanks to empathetic understanding. This mutual trust brings along feelings of respect and love. In student-teacher relationships, like in all human relationships, communication is what matters, and because the teacher values his/her students thanks to empathetic understanding, he/she undertakes to develop the students' potential instead of trying to have them commit some information to memory. This provides the ground for a meaningful, enthusiastic learning environment open to change and development, leaving behind the teaching environment which is monotonous, boring and meaningless for both the student and the teacher.

Empathetic response, named by Dökmen as one of the three main components of empathy, prevents interpersonal communication conflicts in the street, at work, everywhere we communicate with people. The words we choose, the tone of our voice and our intonation, as well as our body language, are important determinants of our ability to give the suitable empathetic response to the person we are addressing. The balanced use of all of these provides the ground for empathetic understanding and can be developed with education. The course of "Play-Dance-and-Music" found in the music teacher training program and based mainly on creative dancing, which aims especially at the achievement of learning to use body language effectively, represents important dynamics which will allow the development of empathy and communication skills.

The utilisation of body language by the teacher is an important factor in increasing the interest of the students in the course and motivating them (Schober, 2007). Dance is an important tool in the utilisation of body language and in establishing communication. Dance is defined by Paulson as "a branch of art where movement is the tool to feel, understand and communicate" (Paulson, 1993; Lin, 2005, p.1), whereas Stinson describes it as "a way to understand the world and to communicate" (Stinson, 1991; Lee, 1998, p.38). Laban, the founder of creative dancing, almost presents the educators with a roadmap of instructions by delineating the components of creative dancing and the movements in these components in fine detail (Kassing&Jay, 2003).

Creative dance performed for the accomplishment of an educational end, although it has got common components with professional dancing performed for an audience, gives the dancer the opportunity to experience a process where subjectivity, creativity, imagination and emotions come to the foreground (Autard, 2002; Özevin 2008), where;

- there is a free learning environment,
- the components of dance are explored in the creative environment established by the teacher,
- creativity is developed through interactive activities of music, mime and drama,
- exercise opportunities which help develop the imaginative faculty are created instead of routine exercises,
- ways to use body language effectively are discovered at the stage of the exploration of space,
- one finds the opportunity to establish a link between the rythmical partitions of the flow of time and the quality of movement,
- one finds the opportunity to interact with their partner or group or objects,
- every expression peculiar to the individual is valuable in improvisation.

Experiencing this process makes the individual feel valued, supports their self-confidence and communication ability, helps develop their creativity and talents and allows them to produce impromptu solutions. Cüceloğlu (2002) mentions five basic relationship needs that a person wants to accommodate in interpersonal relations, namely; being cared for, accepted, valued, being strong and reliable, and being loved. Upon examination of the process which is experienced during creative dancing mentioned above, it can be seen that there exists a close tie between the experience of creative dancing and the basic relationship needs of an individual.

Creative dancing prepares an environment suitable for the discovery of the body's ability of movement and of the quality of time and motion during the horizontal and vertical exploration of space. The dancer, while communicating with other dancers and objects on the one hand, experiences the communication between the separate parts of his/her body on the other hand in this creative environment. This experience is a creative process where the dancer can express themselves freely, get to know their body and use it effectively, socialize and communicate, and produce impromptu solutions; as well as a process which has the potential to guide the dancer's empathetic tendency.

To summarize, empathy consists of behavioral patterns that can be learned and transformed into skills. The development of these behavioral patterns within the framework of teacher training programs is bound to contribute significantly to raising qualified teachers.

2. Method

2.1. Aim of the Research

The purpose of this research study is to investigate the effect of creative dancing on the empathetic tendency of prospect music teachers. The problem sentence of the study can therefore be phrased as follows: Does creative dancing produce a meaningful difference on the empathetic tendency of prospect music teachers?

2.2 Overview of Methodology

This research study was realized using a single group pretest-posttest experimental design. Research subjects consist of 29 4th-year students studying in Dokuz Eylül University (located in Izmir, Turkey) Buca Faculty of Education Department of Fine Arts Education Division of Music Education in Fall Semester 2008-2009. Data collection was carried out using the "Empathetic Tendency Scale" developed by Üstün Dökmen, which is a Likert type measurement tool seeking to measure the tendency of subjects to empathize with others. The reliability coefficient of the scale is .82. The scale was applied before and after the experimental procedure, which covered a time span of 14 weeks during which the subjects took part in activities intended to help them discover the aspects of body, space, quality of motion, time, and relation of creative dancing two hours per week, led by the researcher.

3. Findings

Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test was conducted to measure the effect of creative dancing on the empathetic tendency of prospect music teachers.

Table 1. The Comparison of the Pretest and Posttest Scores of the Subjects in the "Empathetic Tendency Scale"

Pretest-Posttest	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	Z	P
Negative Ranks	2	3.25	6.50		
Positive Ranks	25	14.86	371.50	4.38	.000
Ties	2				
Total	29				

$p < .001$

Comparing the points scored in the empathetic tendency scale before and after the experiment process presented in Table 1, it can be seen that;

- 2 out of 29 students scored lower,
- 25 students scored higher,
- and 2 students scored the same after the experiment.

Considering the value of p computed using the test results, a meaningful difference of a degree of .01 can be observed between the points scored by the subjects in the "Empathetic Tendency Scale" before and after the experiment ($p < .001$). According to this finding, it can be stated that creative dancing has an effect of a meaningful level on the empathetic tendency of prospect music teachers.

4. Results and Suggestions

The results of the study indicate that creative dancing creates a meaningful difference on the empathetic tendency of prospect music teachers. This result hints at the possibility of developing the empathetic understanding of prospect teachers, which will allow them to create a positive class environment by preventing communication conflicts. In line with these hints and based on the study result, the following can be suggested:

"Play-Dance-and-Music" course found in the music teacher training program is thought to have the potential to help raise music teachers who can empathize, with the condition that the course be run based on creative dancing. Directing the academic staff who teach this course to training programs either in Turkey or abroad to allow them to gain proficiency in creative dancing can be effective.

The course of "Play-Dance-and-Music" is observed to have been removed from the program of the department of music teacher training in some Education Faculties. These faculties' restoring this course to their program could be effective in helping develop the empathetic tendency and skills of prospect music teachers as well as helping them develop their creativity and learn to use body language effectively.

Planning creative dancing activities with longer durations which can help empathetic tendency to develop into empathetic skills and studying the effect of these activities on the empathetic skills can contribute significantly to the training of highly qualified music teachers.

5. Discussion

The results of the study indicate that creative dancing creates a meaningful difference on the empathetic tendency of prospect music teachers. This result is only natural when we compare the proceeding of creative dancing with our empathetic tendency.

Our daily patterns of behaviour represent important hints as to our empathetic tendency. Valuing the feelings and thoughts of the other party and putting oneself in the other party's shoes when a problem arises can be named among the most distinguishing characteristics of empathetic individuals. They display a relaxed personality with communication skills based on trust and a sharing attitude. Cüceloğlu

(2002) claims that interpersonal relationships are high in stress in the societies where people do not trust one another. It is natural that empathetic individuals who can make friends easily thanks to their sharing and benevolent personality do not suffer loneliness. Dökmen (2008) underlines the fact that there is an increased probability that people with high empathetic tendency and skills and who, thanks to these skills, can help others, will be liked in their circle. Again, Dökmen mentions that the individuals who can relate their thoughts and feelings well to the other party, who are in harmony with the society, and who display high social sensitivity possess the ability to empathize, based on research findings (Chlopan et al, 1985; Brems, 1988; Dökmen, 2008)

The spiritual objectives determined by Joyce, who examines the physical, mental and spiritual objectives of dance, are especially noteworthy in their potential to support the development of our empathetic understanding (Joyce, 1984). Joyce mentions enjoying oneself, decreasing tension, experiencing emotions, expressing oneself, socializing and respecting oneself and others among the spiritual objectives of dance.

Within the proceeding of creative dancing, the emotional and social development of the individual is emphasized as well as the development of their ability to use body language effectively. This development is supported by dance exercises aimed at communicating via movement, where impromptu individual reactions which arise during group exercises unfold. The emphasis is on the process rather than the outcome or the product (Autard, 2002; Özevin, 2008). Briefly, empathetic understanding which is characterized by traits such as finding value in one another, developing mutual trust, expressing oneself, love, friendship, sharing, happiness, and relaxation lies in the exploration of the elements of dance. The research findings of Gonzales (2006) reveal that creative dancing is effective on the social adequacy of autistic children. It is not a surprise that creative dancing which can be effective even in autistic children who suffer communication difficulties is effective on the empathetic tendency of prospect teachers. In the light of the issues discussed above within the context of our empathetic tendencies and creative dancing, it can be suggested that effect of the creative dancing activities held during the course of "Play-Dance-and-Music" resulted from the issues discussed below:

The emphasis was on the process rather than the product during the creative dancing activities. As part of the process of exploration of the elements of body, space, time, quality of movement and relationship, the students who are to be the music instructors of the future were presented with opportunities of interaction which allow them to express themselves freely by unfolding their creative potential. During this creative process which also targeted emotional and social interaction, the kinetic and sensorial interactions of the prospect teachers with their fellow students and their professor may have developed their ability to express themselves. At the same time, the utilisation of hands, feet and facial expressions independently from each other in

rendering a chosen subject may have speeded up the process of the mutual communication of emotions.

Timid and introverted students were heartened in the free, democratic learning environment where every product was valuable. The students who came over their shyness to participate boldly into the creative process and who enjoyed the feeling of being an important member of the group may have developed a sense of confidence in their own value and of appreciation of the value of others.

A person's being satisfied with their life and contented in general depends on many factors, such as health, family relationships, professional satisfaction, economic position, and many more, among which the individual's being at peace with themself occupies a place that should not be underestimated. The course taught in a free learning environment where the students were able to express themself through dance and where their creative potential was unfolded may have supported the development of self-confidence. It is natural that self-confident individuals who find themself creative and valuable do reach an important stage where they enjoy life. This agrees with the research findings of Özevin (2008), which indicate that creative dancing develops creativity and self-confidence to a meaningful degree. In paired balance exercises the partners learn to trust one another. It would not be incorrect to claim that the sense of mutual trust is invigorated even further as the exercises proceed to larger groups from pairs.

During the rendering of a concept, a phenomenon or a situation, one tries on the one hand to empathize with the role they play while on the other hand they try to display the state of mind they attempt to render with facial expressions and gestures. This process where the participants endeavour to realize an effective group performance by interacting with the other roles which take place in the dance choreographies created together as a group may have created an environment of strong communication. Working with different groups in each activity gives the students the opportunity to get to know the people other than just their close friends, to find out about their personal traits, to communicate and make friends with them. The development of a sense of friendship may have developed the habits of the students to listen to each other and share their problems with each other outside the class, too.

These achievements in the empathetic tendency of prospect music teachers realised through creative dancing suggest that, in the future, they will be able to undertake to create a free and creative learning environment where the musical potential and creativity of the students can develop and where positive feelings reign, rather than adopting a teaching attitude limited to conveying information.

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