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## THE APPLICATION OF CREATIVE DRAMA METHOD IN ERASMUS ORIENTATION PROGRAMME

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### Abstract

Higher education institutions, which play crucial roles in individual and social development; in providing highly skilled human resource for prosperity, economic growth and various employment fields of Europe, assume leadership role in realizing the Europe 2020 Strategy. In this regard, as of 1987, European Commission provides university students with funding opportunities to study and train in European countries through Erasmus Student Mobility Programmes, which has also been available for Turkey since 2004. International Relations Offices of the universities organize orientation programmes for Erasmus students to meet each other, to communicate, to share information related to the countries where they are going to study and train. In this respect, the International Relations Office of Recep Tayyip Erdogan University prepared and applied an orientation programme through creative drama methods to the students who have been selected as Erasmus students under Erasmus Student Mobility for Studies or Training in the academic year 2014-2015, data acquired in line with students' products and their comments during and after the programme are construed through content and descriptive analysis. To evaluate the results, creative drama methods are one of the effective methods in orientation programme. Application of creative drama methods is highly recommended method in orientation programmes.

**Keywords:** Erasmus, Creative Drama, Student Mobility, Orientation Programme.

### 1. Introduction

In European level (European Union, 2013), 80 million people hold low or basic professional skills; 80 million people are at risk of poverty (16%); the employment rate of women and men between 20-64 is quite low (62,6% and 74,2%, respectively). In national level (Türk İstatistik Enstitüsü, 2013), 22 million people are at risk of poverty (29,4%); the employment rate of women and men between 25-54 is also very low (30,8%, 71,5%, respectively). As the results are at an alarming rate, social inclusion became one of the priorities of Europe 2020 strategy with a strong emphasis on job creation and poverty reduction (European Commission, 2014). As a result, European Commission invests in skills and training of people of all ages.

It is of utmost importance for individuals to communicate and interact with each other to realize a successful education. There are many methods to realize this very aim. Creative drama method is one of the methods used in education. "The main reason of creative drama is to educate children, adults and young people by making it possible for them to travel between real and fictional worlds through animation, within awareness and acculturation process to be creative, self-sufficient, self-aware, able to communicate with the environment and improve it; able to improve and enrich own articulation; able to think fictitiously, able to develop esthetic concern, democratic manner and behavior" (Adıgüzel, 2010, s. 80). During creative drama, interpersonal communication and interaction come along naturally. The process helps individual develop own communication skills, since the method makes it possible for the individual to use all senses. The method eases individual's self-expression. "Interaction is inherent in drama. Interaction is a fact appears mostly when a person meets another" (San, 1996:151). Focused on communication and interaction, creative drama method applied in the orientation programme was studied. A layout plan, consisting three steps, warm-up and preparation, animation and evaluation, was prepared and applied.

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Creative drama is used as a method in many areas, and has effective results. After deep literature review, creative drama, for (Selçioğlu, 2010), has positive effect on democratic manner, metacognitive awareness and emotional intelligence of the participants; it was concluded that the process contributed much to development of students' communicative skills (Güneysu & Tekmen, 2009). In this regard, this study was carried out that creative drama method would be effective in orientation programme.

## **2. Creative Drama Method**

Creative drama is widely used in many countries and used as a course, field or a method in education in Turkey. For Önalın Akfırat (2004), creative drama method is effective in social skills development. Moreover, Şimşek (2013) asserts that the method has important contribution to social skills as a course. As a compulsory or elective course, this method is academically available in high schools and education faculties. Creative drama is an academic field all by itself; however, it may be used as a method in education. The method is utilized in different levels of education and training; provides effective results. Used in social science fields, creative drama is effective method in science, as well. Bil (2012) concludes that education through creative drama has positive effects on in-group relations, communication and development of body language.

## **3. Erasmus Student Mobility**

Under Key Action 1 (KA1) of the Erasmus+ Programme, higher education students are able to study or train in the field of education (student mobility for studies) and training (student mobility for traineeships) in one of the programme countries<sup>1</sup>. Formerly the programme was a part of Lifelong Learning Programme between 2007 and 2013. The programme was renamed as Erasmus+ Programme for the period of 2014-2020 (EACEA, 2014). The Erasmus+ Programme aims to boost skills and employability, as well as modernizing Education, Training, and Youth work. The seven year programme will have a budget of €14.7 billion; a 40% increase compared to current spending levels, reflecting the EU's commitment to investing in these areas (European Commission, 2014). The new budget is extended to €14.7 billion (%40 increase when compared to previous programme) with a target of providing study and training opportunities for over 4 million European students.

Student Mobility for Studies, being part of their study programmes, students of short, first (bachelor), second (master) or third (doctoral) cycles, are able to study for one or two semesters in the partner university holding Erasmus Charter for Higher Education (ECHE). For Student Mobility for Traineeships, students of every cycle are able to train for at least 2 months in a field-related organization in one of the programme countries.

Erasmus Programme will continue to perform from 2014 to 2020 under the name of Erasmus+ Programme. The programme renews itself and its principles and policies every 7 years. During the previous term (2007-2013), Turkey is among the top 5 sending countries regarding student mobilities (studying and training) and staff mobilities (EACEA, 2014). The statistics shows that Erasmus+ Programme is very popular both in European and national level, which made us focus on its effectiveness in regional level.

## **5. Method**

The study was carried out with 30 university students, eligible to take part in Erasmus Mobility, by applying creative drama methods in Drama Class in Faculty of Education, Recep Tayyip Erdogan University. Participants stated their opinions under three titles on 50x70 boards:

1. My expectations
2. I choose to go to ... , because ...
3. Why do I want to be an Erasmus student?

Data acquired from group works of participants, who will go to Italy, Bulgaria, Romania, Poland, Great Britain, Lithuania, Belgium, Czech Republic and Germany, is also analyzed. After orientation, participants were asked to write personal gains from the programme. Data is analyzed through content and descriptive analysis regarding qualitative research.

## **6. Results and Discussion**

Before orientation;

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<sup>1</sup> Program Countries: Denmark, Ireland, France, Italy, Austria, Finland, Sweden, United Kingdom, Liechtenstein, Norway, Belgium, Czech Republic, Germany, Greece, Spain, Croatia, Cyprus, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Portugal, Slovenia, Iceland, Turkey, Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Malta, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

**Table 1. My expectations**

Codes	f
Learning a foreign language	10
Seeing new places	8
Meeting different cultures	6
Meeting new people	5
Widening personal vision	5
Acquiring general knowledge	5
Personal development	4
Career development	4
Contribution to professional life	4
Being self-reliant	4
Holding a good CV	4
Having fun	4
Gaining different experience	3

Table 1 shows the results of expectations of the participants before orientation. Learning a foreign language, seeing new places and meeting different cultures are among the most prevailing statements. In addition, meeting new people, widening personal vision, acquiring general knowledge, personal development, career development, contribution to Professional life, being self-reliant, holding a good CV and having fun are the other prevailing statements. However, gaining different experience is the least prevailing statement.

**Table 2. I chose to go to ..., because ...**

Country	Because ...	f
Poland	The best option	4
	Friendly advice	3
	Have acquaintances	2
	The best in the field	2
	To learn Polish	2
	Economical	2
	The only option	2
Italy	Gone before and liked	1
	Nice place	2
	Have an interesting history	1
Romania	Special place	1
Bulgaria	The best option	3
Czech Republic	The only option	1
	Have background knowledge	2
	The best in the field	2
Great Britain	To go with a friend	1
	The best in the field	1
	Many possibilities for personal development	1
Lithuania	To improve language skills	1
	Economical	1
	The only option	1
Germany and Sweden	Strong economy	1
	Rich opportunities	1
	The best educational offers	1
Belgium	The only option	1

Table 2 shows the results of reasons of participants for choosing the specified country they want to go. The most prevailing statements are best option. The least prevailing statements are gone before and liked, have an interesting story, special place, the only option, to go with a friend, the best in the field. It is apparent from the results that participants chosen the best option have background knowledge.

**Table 3. Why do I want to be an Erasmus student?**

Codes	f
Academic career	9
Personal development	7
Visiting different countries	6
A good experience	5
A good CV	5
Improving language skills	5
A good future	4
Self-reliant	4
For learning	4
Contribution to professional life	3
Meeting new people	3

Necessary for studying abroad	1
My girlfriend is there	1
Having fun	1
Gone before and liked	1
Seeing a new country	1

Table 3 shows the results of reasons of participants for being an Erasmus student. The most prevailing statements are academic career, personal development and visiting different countries. The least prevailing statements are necessary for studying abroad, having fun, gone before and liked, and seeing a new country. It is apparent from the study results that participants have general knowledge regarding following items; capital city, touristic sights, language, economy and money unit.

**Table 4. Comments of the participants related to Erasmus orientation programme prepared with creative drama method**

Codes	f
Entertaining	17
Meeting	12
Meeting friends going to same country	12
Having detailed information about Erasmus	10
Method is effective and beneficial	9
Learning drama method	7
Recommendation	7
Sharing information about the countries	6
Group work is effective	6
Socializing	6
Communicate skills	5
Share	5
Finding answers for questions	5
Learning procedures in Erasmus programme	5
Sincere atmosphere	5
Interaction	4
How to meet new people	4
Increase in self-reliance	4
Feeling free	4
Contribution to personal development	4
Learning to listen	3
Suppressing bias	3

Table 4 presents comments of the participants related to Erasmus orientation programme prepared with creative drama method. The most prevailing statements are entertaining, meeting friends going to same country, having detailed information about Erasmus, meeting and 'method is effective and beneficial.' In addition, participants also stated that group work is effective, and the method helps suppressing bias, contributing to personal development, creating sincere atmosphere, increasing self-reliance, learning to listen, socializing, feeling free, sharing information about the countries, finding answers for questions, learning procedures in Erasmus programme.

Comments of the participants were analyzed through content analysis. Some comments of the participants are given below through direct-transfer method:

P4: "It was great to be here with different friends; I had fun and the Office should do this again.."

P5: "I got information about all what I wonder, especially about Erasmus. I met new friends. I found friends who would go to same country. I learned procedures in Erasmus programme."

P9: "It was an entertaining meeting. I think that it was effective. The Office should further such meetings."

P14: "I found all the answers for my questions. Games were amusing. I am very pleased to be here."

P19: "We had chance to meet while having fun. In addition, I learned the procedures in Erasmus clearly."

P24: "It was relaxing regarding social awareness and informing. Such activities should continue."

P26: "Personally, it was beneficial. It was an amusing programme to meet new friends."

P27: "Now, I know with whom I will go to same country. Erasmus scared me before. But everything is fine now."

P28: "I have never participated in such a programme before. I am happy. I think that it was beneficial for interaction and communication of students."

Majority of the participants agree that they were happy with the orientation programme prepared with creative drama method. It is easy to state that satisfaction is beyond expectations of the participants. The most prevailing statements were meeting with new people by having fun and playing games; obtaining all information about Erasmus; an entertaining programme; raising social awareness; suppressing bias. Participants were content with the creative drama method.

## 7. Conclusion

The study with 30 higher education students who would participate in Erasmus Student Mobility Programme has found out that creative drama method was an effective method in Erasmus orientation. The participants stated that thanks to such kind of programme, they are more self-reliant, happier than before. They also expressed that group work was effective; they had chance to socialize with other Erasmus students. The participants also stressed that such programmes should be furthered with creative drama method. The findings of this study suggest that creative drama method is rather effective in orientation programme. Further research in this field would be of great help in assessing further efficacy of creative drama. Moreover, the method may be used regularly and be of great importance in other educational activities.

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