

Fostering Historical Empathy through Drama in Education: An Action-Research Study on High-School First-Graders

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Abstract

The action-research study presented in this article illustrates how drama in education might be used to foster historical empathy in high-school first-grade students. For the purposes of this action research, four scenarios based on drama-in-education techniques were designed and applied on a sample of twenty-two students. The analysis of the findings showed that the students' understanding of historical contexts and different viewpoints on the past -both of which comprise important aspects of historical empathy- can be significantly encouraged by a drama-based instruction, as long as the students become engaged in activities that bring them to delve into a specific historical era, thus propelling them towards the study of historical sources.

Keywords: *Historical Empathy, Drama in Education, Action Research, High School, Action Research, Role Playing, Teacher in Role, Mantle of the Expert, Teaching Scenarios*

Özet

Bu makalede sunulan eylem araştırması çalışması, eğitimde dramanın, tarihsel empatiyi beslemede lise birinci sınıf öğrencileriyle nasıl kullanılabileceğine ilişkin açıklamalar içermektedir. Bu amaç doğrultusunda eğitimde drama tekniklerine dayalı dört senaryo oluşturulmuş ve 22 kişilik bir öğrenci örnekleme uygulanmıştır. Bulguların çözümlenmesi sonucunda öğrencilerin tarihsel bağlamı ve geçmişte olan farklı bakış açılarını anlamaları (ki bahsedilen iki kavram da tarihsel empatinin önemli yönlerinden oluşmaktadır.) önemli bir biçimde 'drama temelli bir yapılanma ile desteklenmelidir' sonucuna ulaşılmıştır. Öğrenciler; kendilerini özel bir tarihi dönemi araştıracakları noktaya ulaştıran etkinliklerle uğraşmaları durumunda tarihsel kaynaklarla çalışma yönüne sürükleneceklerdir.

Anahtar Sözcükler: *Tarihsel Empati, Eğitimde Drama, Eylem Araştırması, Lise, Rol Oynama, Öğretmenin Rolde Olması, Uzman Mantosu, Eğitim Senaryoları*

i. Introduction

The last decades have seen the rise of new quests in the field of historical education, which urge us to redefine the efficacy of the media and the interpretations we use in approaching the past. Drama as a pedagogical tool offers the student a bridge from the experiential stage to a proper understanding of historical conditions through a recreation of the past (Tsaftaridis 2011; 149).

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In this regard, drama can greatly enhance historical learning: the appreciation of history within the framework of educational entertainment (also referred to as “edutainment”) with a strong emphasis on cooperation, participation and experience, as well as the provision of equal opportunities for both a personalized acquisition of knowledge and a critical interpretation of the past, are effective factors on the cultivation of historical empathy as a fundamental aim of history learning, where all conventional textbooks and teaching methods hardly seem to bear any significant results.

The present study proposes a framework of history didactics which is based on the principles of drama in education and focused on empathetic reconstruction and creative imagination. The framework in question concerns students of the secondary level of education, where there has been no extended research, and indeed students of the lower secondary level, that of high school, which provides a fertile ground for research experimentations.

ii. Historical Empathy

The epistemology of history presents a long tradition of debates on the concept of understanding the causes of individual action and the role of wider social practices in the historical process (Lee et al., 1997; 233). The concept of this understanding is known as “empathy”, a term closely linked to the modern perceptions of history, being based on the assumption that the past is refutable (Repousi, 2004; 343; Nakou, 2000; 60, 105).

The concept of historical empathy has been variously approached. Lee and Ashby (2001, 24-25) have suggested that empathy does not pertain solely to the awareness that important historical factors or societies fostered epoch-relevant viewpoints, but has mainly to do with the ability to trace the specific connections among circumstances, goals, and ideas of the actors of history. Summarizing the definitions that have been proposed from time to time by various scholars, we could define historical empathy as the ability to place one's self in the shoes of another person within a specific historical context, with the aim of understanding the actions of the person in that context.³

The concept of historical empathy as an element of historical thought⁴ has exerted an important influence on the theory and teaching of history in school, which aims at an understanding and interpretation of historical reality (Barton & Levstik 2007, 273-321; Harris & Foreman-Peck 2004; Moniot 2002, 79; VanSledright 2001, 57, 66). And despite some existing opinions that empathy⁵ is hard to achieve in the context of the classroom (SREB 1986, 9; Cairns, 1989; 13), research has shown that the students can indeed achieve satisfactory levels of empathy, if provided with a wide range of activities (Barton & Levstik, 2007; 295; Kourgiantakis 2005; Nakou 2000, 108). In fact, after years of research, Lee, Dickinson and Ashby (Lee & Ashby 2001; Lee et al. 1997; Ashby & Lee 1987) have developed a descriptive system that encompasses the stages of empathy primary- and secondary-education students go through; the present analysis

3 Cf. Yilmaz 2007, 332; see, among others, Barton and Levstik 2008, 278-292, 302; Davis 2001, 4; Portal 1987, 89-90; Little 1983a & 1983b, 30-31.

4 There has been much discussion as to whether historical empathy can also include, beyond logical understanding, an emotive involvement in the actions of the people from the past. For affirmative views see Lee & Ashby 2001, 24; Foster 2001, 169-170; for negative views: Barton & Levstik 2008, 301-302; Little 1983b.

5 The categorization of Ashby, Lee and Dickinson is probably the most noted and widely used (Rantala 2011, 65). Other well known categorizations of the stages of historical empathy are those of Shemilt (1984; also quoted in Leontsinis 1999, 131-135; Kalogiratos 1999) and of the Southern Regional Examination Board (S.R.E.B. 1986).

will be based on these five stages:

1. “The Unintelligible Past”. At this initial stage –where Ashby and Lee (1987) identified what they termed “the divi past”– students see the past as incomprehensible and essentially view people from the past as ‘stupid’ or ‘thick’ because they did things so differently from themselves.
2. “Generalized Stereotypes”. Here past actions are evaluated generically in terms of conventional stereotyped roles.
3. “Everyday Empathy”. Past actions are set against the cultural contexts of today's world, without consistently distinguishing between the older and the modern views and values.
4. “Restricted Historical Empathy”. The recognition is established that people in the past had a different than ours level of knowledge, different views and values, but no depth is reached in their representation and interpretation.
5. “Contextual Historical Empathy”. Past actions are eventually viewed as integrated in a wider context of views and values, and it is recognized that they form a network of goals reaching far beyond any appearances.

iii. The Cultivation of Historical Empathy in the Classroom

According to Ashby and Lee (1987, 85-87), the cultivation of historical empathy in students is closely connected to the direction they receive from the teacher, who should be encouraging them to discuss amongst themselves, dealing with historical issues on the cooperative basis of either small groups or the classroom at large, rather than strictly imposing on them a direct teacher-to-student approach. The teacher should be showing high tolerance to mistakes, evaluating the contributions of all students while resisting the tendency to instantly provide any corrections or “right” answers.

According to Davis (2001; 4), the cultivation of empathy is based on a number of factors, including a sufficient historical knowledge on part of both the teacher and the students, the didactic competence of the teacher, the sources provided,⁶ the development of students' historical thought and their familiarity with the processing of historical evidence. Davis suggests that the application of the proper approach should not involve rejecting errors, ignoring plausibility or accepting untenable interpretations. In all cases, imagination must be held in check by evidence.

iv. Historical Empathy and Drama: Literature Review

Drama in Education seems to provide a par excellence didactic context for the cultivation of historical empathy, as described above. The use of drama in the classroom is characterized by the team character of the investigation of issues, by the teacher's supportive role and by the gradual process of the students' understanding. This is why the relationship between drama in education⁷ and historical empathy is apparently very strong, as Fines and Verrier (1974; 89) have suggested in the past and some noted drama teachers have persistently reported (Goalen 1995, 65-66; Fairclough 1994; Fleming 1992; Wilson & Woodhouse 1990; Childs & Pond 1990; May & Williams 1987)

As remarked by Fines and Verrier (*ibid.*), there is a close relationship between history and

⁶ Scholars suggest the processing of archive materials, books and a varrety of other sources (David 2001, 4)

⁷ On drama education, see Kondoyianni 2012, Papadopoulos 2010, Alkistis 2008, Audi and Chatzigeorgiou 2007.

drama, especially since history is no more considered as a stacking up of events (*ibid.*, 83). The target skills of this approach of school history are searching for, comparing among and working with sources, extracting conclusions in accordance with these sources, as well as recognizing that people from the past may have had different thoughts and beliefs (*ibid.*, 84).

Thompson (1983, 22) identifies historical empathy as a goal per se, which is achievable through the exercise of the mental skills involved in source use, in pinpointing and deciphering all relevant information. He elsewhere asserts that the skill of historical empathy can be optimally developed through the experiential approach which involves the application of drama, role-playing games and music (*ibid.*, 83), provided that the students are able to evaluate the information and possess a basic social awareness (*ibid.*, 21-22).

During the same year, Little (1983a) asserted that drama is valuable for the teaching of school history, in that it convinces students of the reality of the past and offers them opportunities to reflect on it through guided use of their imagination and sessions of action and discussion. These simulations and role-playing games cultivate skills of historical thinking, and through problem-solving activities encourage children to deal with historical situations and investigate the impact of the events they are learning about. Participation in drama also stimulates research which can lead to a deeper understanding of even the subjective level, while children are acquiring knowledge through participatory processes (*ibid.*, 12-16).

Moving along the same lines, Goalen and Hendy (1993), working with a sample of forty-nine students, twenty of whom were the control group and twenty-nine the experimental group, have experimentally proven that the historical thinking of average-performance students develops when they approach the historical material through drama-in-education techniques.

The Greek professor Leontsinis (1999; 144-145) has argued that "history far surpasses geography and the other social sciences in its suitability for dramatization, theatrical play and imitation", while Smyrniaos (2008, 176-181) and Avgeri (2011) have linked role-playing and dramatization with historical empathy. Kavalierou (2006, 483-484) has also pointed out that the success of history dramatization requires a simple approach, the acting out of small historical episodes, a respect for all characters and events, a high degree of accuracy and objectivity, an emphasis on the meaning of conflicts and the encouragement of students to arrive at conclusions.

Founded on the above assumptions, the present study focuses on the use of specifically structured drama-in-education techniques in dealing with historical persons, proposing an alternative form of fostering historical empathy in the high-school first-grade.

v. Methodology

This study presents findings from an action research that took place during the 2011-2012 school year in a high school in Attica. It concerns a series of small-scale research projects in real classroom situations which aimed at investigating their influence on the cultivation of historical empathy in students (cf. Robson, 2010; 256-25; Cohen & Manion 1994, 258-259). The action research in question is part of a PhD preliminary research on a relevant subject, during which problems and hypotheses were sought out for further research investigation (Cohen & Manion 1994, 258). Consequently, the findings presented below, along with the presentation of the action itself, cannot be generalized, as they only present proposals that were implemented on a limited number of students and evaluated through the viewpoint of the researcher.

The action research was conducted on a sample of twenty-two (22) first-graders in an urban-area high school in West Attica. This class was made up of twelve (12) boys and ten (10) girls, twenty-one (21) of which were Greek, and one (1) was of Albanian origin. None of the students was known to have any specific learning difficulties, although many of them found it difficult to comprehend the texts, to critically read them and to express themselves with the written word.

This research project was unfolded in four (4) teaching sessions on ancient history lasting between 45 and 90 minutes, whose purpose was:

(a) to investigate the feasibility of structured instructional interventions based on the application of the drama-in-education principles on the teaching of history with the aim of fostering historical empathy, and

(b) to evaluate in how far the proposed learning environment promotes the development of the historical empathy of the students, based on their comprehension of the historical context and their recognition of the different perspectives on the past.

A fundamental requirement for the development of the teaching scenarios⁸ that were applied was their incorporation in a didactic framework based on the principles of constructivist theory, investigative learning and sociocultural theory (Tsakiri & Kapetanidou, 2007; 35-42). The activities used were constructed on the basis of drama-in-education techniques, such as the “hot chair”, the meetings, the “mantle of the expert”, the “role on the wall», the «role playing» of the students, the «teacher in role», the «objects of the character», «creative writing» through the role of the historical character, the “gossip circle” (Belliveau et al. 2008, 5-7; Heathcote 2008; Verrier 2008; Goalen 1995; Goalen & Hendy 1994; Goalen & Hendy 1993; Fines & Verrier 1974), all suitably adapted in the context of historical learning.

The data collection was carried out as required by the action-research principles. The following tools were specifically used:

(a) observation and a detailed written recording of the process of every instructional intervention;

(b) worksheets including questions for the students to answer, in order to assess their ability to empathize with people from the past, and

(c) texts and presentations describing the students’ activities and their creative expression in the classroom.

The findings were analyzed according to the system of the historical empathy stages of Ashby, Lee and Dickinson (see ii. above).

vi. The Instructional Interventions

1st Instructional Intervention: The Bronze Age

The first instructional intervention was dealing with the Bronze Age⁹. As part of the introduction, the students were presented with three large cardboards, on each of which was drawn a natural-human-size contour representing an islander from the Cyclades, a Minoan and a Mycenaean, respectively, following the «role on the wall» technique (Papadopoulos 2007; 67; Avdi & Chatzigeorgiou 2007, 90; Neelands & Goode 2000, 22).

8 The use of the term “scenario” in the educational context refers to a set of activities that are designed in order to didactically approach a subject (Gika 2002, 353-354). A lesson based on drama techniques is made up of three parts: a) an introduction that serves as a “warmup”, b) the elaboration, where the main instructional intervention takes place, during which the students are faced with the conflicts of the historical period they are examining, and c) a summarization of all activities and a reflection on them (Belliveau et al. 2008, 4; Heinig 1988).

9 The Bronze Age in Greece lasted from 3000 to 1100 B.C. Three distinct and yet similar civilizations flourished in the Hellenic world during that period: the Cycladic on the homonymous group of islands in the Southern Aegean, that of the Minoans in Crete, and the Mycenaean civilization in the Peloponnese (Christopoulos et al. 1970).

The students were divided into three groups and were asked to wear the “mantle of the expert” (Papadopoulos, 2007; 70; Neelands & Goode, 2000; 34; Heathcote & Herbert 1985) for the role they chose. Their mission was to assist a hypothetical filmmaker who intended to prepare a documentary on Greek prehistory and proto-history.

During the elaboration phase, after the students had chosen their role and era, they went on to get involved with “group painting” (Avdi & Chatzigeorgiou 2007, 88-89; Neelands & Goode, 2000; 14) and to draw the facial features and the body of the role they had taken up. Around his contour they painted various objects that could have belonged to him, and on his body they jotted down all sorts of pieces of knowledge, thoughts and worries he could have had. Among his belongings they also recorded some thoughts of their own or other people of our time about their historical figure.

The intervention was completed with the students composing a short documentation of their role and with a presentation thereof to the “teacher-filmmaker” (Belliveau et al. 2008, 6-8; Papadopoulos, 2007; 72-73; Neelands & Goode, 2000; 40).

2nd Instructional Intervention: The Second Hellenic Colonization

The subject of the second instructional intervention was the Second Hellenic Colonization¹⁰. The introduction involved first a narration of when, why and how the ancient Greeks were drawn to so many new destinations, and then a demonstrative type of activity (Govas 2002, 23; Alkistis, 1998; 43) that resulted in the formation of four teams with a leader for each group, the colony founder.¹¹

During the elaboration phase, the teams of the to-be colonists were asked to choose their relocation sites. What could have been their motives? What reasons might have led them to depart from their native territories? Equipped with a map of the Mediterranean and the Black Sea denoting the regions rich in natural resources during the Archaic period, the students take counsel together (Neelands & Goode, 2000; 35) and present their decisions, thoughts and concerns.

The closing stage calls for the students to express themselves as colonists with a piece of creative writing (Belliveau et al., 2008, 6-8; Papadopoulos, 2007; 67; Neelands & Goode, 2000; 16) reflecting on their experience: *Twenty years later, in a second homeland... Was it worth it? Has my life really changed for the better?*

3rd Instructional Intervention: The Legislation of Solon

The third instructional intervention was dealing with the legislation of Solon¹². An improvisation was employed as a “warm up” (Alkistis 1998, 87): the students as poor and debt-ridden Athenians thirty years after the establishment of Draco’s code of laws¹³ are discussing amongst themselves on the destructive consequences of the measures.

Through the use of a role-play (Belliveau et al., 2008, 6-8; Jarvis et al., 2002; Neelands & Goode, 2000; 72; Lloyd, 1998) students present one scene per team. There follows a whole-class debate (Neelands & Goode, 2000; 35) about what course of action should be followed and the proceedings are presented narratively. A student-herald reads out the laws and the teacher-Solon addresses the students-citizens and offers to answer their questions regarding this legislation.

10 The Second Hellenic Colonization took place in the period spanning between the 8th and the 6th centuries B.C., during which the ancient Greeks targeted locations and flooded coastlines further and further into the Mediterranean Sea (Christopoulos et al. 1971).

11 The term colony founder (οἰκιστής in Greek) refers to the leader of a colony-founding expedition during the Second Hellenic Colonization (ibid.).

12 Solon (c. 639 - 559 B.C.) was an important Athenian statesman and legislator, a poet and one of the seven wise men of ancient Greece (ibid.).

13 Draco was the first codifier of Greek law in antique Athens, a task assigned to him by the Athenians in 624 B.C. His laws became legendary for their cruel punishments to such an extent, that the Greek phrase “Draconian measures” (Δρακόντεια μέτρα) survives to this day to denote the epitome of harshness (ibid.).

In the closing stage, the students are asked to assess the situation from the multiple perspectives of three different roles: *If you were poor peasants, if you were aristocrats, and if you were people who do not wish to get too much involved in the public affairs, what would you tell Solon?* After the assessment of this intervention, there followed a number of additional activities, during which the students did some creative writing from the viewpoint of their historical role, commenting on the legislation of Solon using the indicated sources.

4th Instructional Intervention: From Peisistratus to Cleisthenes

The fourth instructional intervention had to do with Peisistratus¹⁴ and the reforms of Cleisthenes.¹⁵ The introduction included a demonstrative type of activity in order for the students to gain some spatiotemporal perspective on the antique city of Athens of 520 B.C.

The students-Athenians of this era had to weigh the positive and the negative points of the policy of Peisistratus. Those who assumed the role of the conspirators, read the record of proceedings¹⁶ that had been kept by the hypothetical registrar of their conspiratory team and they were asked to discuss amongst themselves and meet a decision: to overturn or not to overturn Peisistratus? The students presented their arguments and their decisions, and through their narration presented the actual historical developments. A student-herald read out the reforms of Cleisthenes, and then, while the students participating in the “gossip circle” (Avdi & Chatzigeorgiou, 2007; 93) were discussing the new measures, the teacher-Athenian woman intervened, circulating the rumour that Cleisthenes is a descendant of tyrants and other “spicy” information about his ancestry, based on a source from the *History* of Herodotus¹⁷ (Herodotus VI.126-131). On the occasion of this intervention, the students expressed their opinions on the role of personality in history.

The intervention ended with the students creating a piece of writing from the viewpoint of their historical role, evaluating the reforms of Cleisthenes.

vii. Data Analysis¹⁸

During the first instructional intervention students were struggling to adequately cope and critically apply their knowledge, and they obviously tended to project their thoughts and attitudes of our time onto this period. Only in one case did they demonstrate some “limited historical empathy”, attuning with the historical conditions of the time even without going too deep: *“We chose this woman, because society at that time was probably matriarchal and because they thought childbearing was a mysterious procedure. This is why they had so many female figurines during that period”*. They generally did not depart from the general stereotypes: *“Women at that time dressed very simply and stayed home all day to take care for their family”* or *“We chose the character of the Anax¹⁹ because he was an important person at that time. He was strict, he was the one who decided for the people, big enough to frighten the enemies and impressive overall”*. In one case the students exhibited a complete lack of empathy with the past, reproducing some information from the textbook, showing no effort whatsoever to connect with each other or with the role:

14 Pisistratus was a tyrant of Athens for about twenty years until his death in 527 B.C. As a tyrant he had seized political power with the help of some of his adherents, despite opposition from the majority (ibid).

15 Cleisthenes was an Athenian statesman of the 6th century B.C., who introduced democratic government to ancient Athens (ibid).

16 As “record of proceedings” we used an adapted for the purposes of this activity text from the Foundation of the Hellenic World website on Pisistratus (FHW 2001).

17 Herodotus was an ancient Greek historian and geographer who lived in the fifth century B.C. In his *History* he wrote about the Persian wars, as well as about various places he saw and people he met during his travels. Cicero described him as “Patrem Historiae”, the “Father of History” (Christopoulos et al. 1971).

18 We have to stress that the “data” reported here are only some selected examples, just a fraction of the total findings we gathered.

19 The Anax was the supreme lord of a Mycenaean centre (Cristopoulos et al. 1970).

"She is the Snake Goddess,²⁰ the main goddess of the Minoan civilization associated with life and the earth. The Minoan civilization was noted for the development of the arts and the olive tree was its sacred symbol. People of that civilization used to make various artefacts out of gold, silver, copper, clay, ivory and other easy to shape materials."

Despite the observed low levels of empathy, students reported that the activities were a lot of fun: "We felt like we were real experts... we combined facts and we could better understand what we had learned," realizing that the historical past has a real dimension, a realization of fundamental importance for any examination of the development of empathy in the classroom: "We realized that these people actually lived back then, that they do not exist only in books as little stories... they are not mythical creatures" (cf. Little 1983a, 1983b). Given, then, that historical empathy is a skill that takes time and consistent effort to develop, we arrived at the conclusion that the students' performance could be improved through more rigorously structured practice.

Indeed, during the second instructional intervention, the students reached a higher and very satisfying, for their age, level of "limited historical empathy", possibly due to the nature of the activities that placed them among the decision-makers of the Second Hellenic Colonization: "The area on which we settled is rich in natural resources. Fishing, metals and the rich soil of our area helped us develop various professions. Also, all these natural resources helped us to develop trade. We became a very well-known people. Our economy grew", "In our old homeland, the economy had collapsed. Many peoples started changing territories, and so we too were forced to look for better lands, with richer natural resources", and "The new colonies changed my life more than I expected, because now I work as a merchant and I make more money than when I used to be a small dealer, and so now I can offer my family more, thanks to the merchandise I sell. Sometimes I do miss my old country, though, and I feel like giving it all up and going back".

With this second intervention, the students showed a clear understanding of the specific aims and aspirations of the people from the past, and that their decisions and actions are parts of complex procedures. They elaborated on the circumstances of the actors of history through the lens of their own modern time, fostered cooperation and trust and were led to logical constructs in accordance with the standards of the period they examined, all of which are essential steps towards the cultivation of historical empathy.

During the third instructional intervention, all of the students reached the stage of the "limited historical empathy", focusing on a very important element of the era they were dealing with, though rather exclusively on it, maybe due to the fact that it is presented in the textbook as the reason that led to seisachtheia:²¹ *"-What happened to your neighbor? -What, you haven't heard? He was so deep in debt, he lost his personal freedom; and not only he, his whole family have lost their freedom, too! It's insane... -I'm not that far from being kicked into slavery myself, you know. -Same here. He wants his money back, or I'm a slave in no time, too. -There's got to be something we can do"*.

Moreover, the students' reports revealed that they understood how the same historical event can trigger off different reactions to people who have different roles and positions in a given society, thus fulfilling a prerequisite for understanding the action of people in the past. Farmer:

20 The Snake Goddess is a type of figurine very common in the excavations of Minoan Crete: the typical serpent-wielding bare-bosomed woman of the Minoan culture (Christopoulos et al. 1970).

21 Seisachtheia (Σεῖσάχθεια in Greek) was a set of laws instituted by the Athenian lawmaker Solon in order to rectify by debt relief the widespread serfdom and slaves that had run rampant in Athens by the 6th century B.C. (Christopoulos et al. 1971).

“Well done! Congratulations! You’ve made the right decisions; you’ve freed us from the yoke of the aristocrats who have been oppressing us for so long.” Nobleman: “I am very unhappy and angry at the measures you have adopted; you have lessened and weakened our social class.”

Additional activities brought forth another factor conducing to the cultivation of historical empathy: the integration in drama-in-education activities of primary or secondary historical sources.

The fourth instructional intervention brought the students very close to the realization of a “wider-context empathy“, as they combined facts and reached decisions that could be valid in the historical episodes they were acting out: *“He offered relief to the poor with loans and land redistributions. However, we believe he did it only to trick them into giving him their votes. We are against this course of action. We want our leaders [...] to tell us the truth and to respect us. [...] This is our firm belief and we intend to overthrow him.”*

Another interesting point was brought forth by the debate on the role of the reforming leaders’ personality in history, when the students concluded that Cleisthenes was not just the product of the life circumstances he was nurtured on, but also of the city’s broad political landscape: *“Yes, but with his father being who he was, and if there hadn’t been for Pisistratus and the Athenians had been oblivious to the evil tyranny does, then Cleisthenes might very well have not proceeded to any such actions”.*

viii. Conclusions

The present study has argued that Drama in Education can present an effective method of enhancing the historical empathy for high school students. Although not the highest levels of historical empathy were observed during every instructional intervention according to the system of stages of Lee & Ashby (see iii above), all students demonstrated a remarkable development in their empathetic approach to the past, which proves that despite all existing difficulties in the achievement of this skill, the repeated interventions are of paramount importance for the gradual progress towards this direction, as has been pointed out by Davis (see iii above).

At the same time, the instructional interventions have shown (as Little argues in iv above) that the activities structured according to the drama-in-education principles have a strong potential of awakening the students to the real dimension of the past, an awakening fundamental to the cultivation of historical empathy. Moreover, the interventions have demonstrated the co-operative nature of the development of empathetic thinking, a condition pinpointed as quintessential both by Lee & Ashby (ibid.) and Thompson (see iv above), as drama offered students the opportunity to exchange thoughts and ideas in a climate of trust and cooperation either in small groups or in the classroom at large.

Another interesting conclusion is that the instructional interventions, thanks to the application of drama techniques, created a learner-centered environment where all students, regardless of their individual academic performance, felt free to express their opinions without fearing to be inaccurate in their analyses of the past, a fundamental prerequisite for the development of historical empathy, as noted by Lee and Ashby (ibid.) and Davis (ibid.).

Furthermore, the use of historical sources showed that the cultivation of empathy becomes more efficient when the use of drama is coupled with the study of sources, as Fines and Verrier (see iv above) have argued, a combination that encourages students to approach any historical information critically and constructively (Little, ibid.), “harnessing” imagination with evidence (Davis, ibid.).

Finally, the effectiveness of interventions showed that the teaching scenarios constructed on the base of drama-in-education principles need to be simply structured and carefully organized by the teacher, in order to have an effective influence on the historical empathy of students, as Kavalierou (see iv above) has theoretically suggested.

Perhaps the most important of all conclusions drawn from these four instructional interventions reviewed succinctly in this study, is that the students embraced the drama techniques with enthusiasm, and responded satisfactorily to the challenges they were presented with. This enthusiasm led to a more involved approach of the history lesson on their part, disclosing for them new horizons for critical thought and historical empathy.

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Özet

Eğitimde Drama Yolu ile Tarihsel Empatiyi Beslemek:

Lise Birinci Sınıf Öğrencileriyle Gerçekleştirilen Bir Eylem Araştırması¹

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i.Giriş

Tarih eğitimi alanında son yıllarda yapılan yeni araştırmalar bizleri geçmişe ilişkin kullandığımız yaklaşımlarımızda medya ve çevirinin etkisini yeniden tanımlamaya sevk etmiştir. Bir eğitim yöntemi olarak drama, geçmişin yeniden yaratılması yolunda öğrencilere; tarihsel şartların anlaşılması için deneyimsel bir aşama ve gerçek bir anlama arasında köprü olmayı sunmuştur (Tsaftaridis, 2011;149).

Yapılan bu çalışma, eğitimde dramanın ilkeleri ile temellendirilmiş, empati kurabilen, yeniden yapılandırmaya ve yaratıcı düşünceye odaklanmış bir tarih öğretimi yapısını önermektedir.

ii.Tarihsel Empati

Tarihin epistemolojisi, tarihsel süreçte; bireysel etkileri ve daha geniş sosyal uygulamaların rolünü anlama açısından farklı görüşlerin uzun tartışma geleneklerini sunmaktadır (Lee at al. 1997; 233). “Empati” olarak bilinen bu kavram; geçmişin aksi ispatlanabilir varsayımlara dayandırıldığı ve tarihin modern algılarına yakından bağlantılandığı bir terimdir (Repousi, 2004; 343; Nakou, 2000; 60, 105).

Çeşitli zamanlarda, farklı bilim adamları tarafından yapılan tanımlamalar özetlenecek olursa tarihsel empatiyi; belirli bir tarihsel bağlamı ve bağlamda yer alan insanın eylemlerini anlama amacıyla kendini bir başkasının ayakkabısına yerleştirme yetisi olarak tanımlayabiliriz⁴. Doğrusu yıllar süren araştırmaların ardından, Lee, Dickinson ve Ashby (Lee& Ashby 2001; Lee at al 1997; Ashby& Lee 1987) ilköğretim ve ortaöğretim öğrencilerine de uygulanan ve empati aşamalarını kapsayan tanımlayıcı bir sistem geliştirmişlerdir. Günümüzde yapılan çalışmalar aşağıda yer alan bu beş aşamaya göre temellendirilmektedir:

1. “Anlaşılmaz Geçmiş”. Bu başlangıç aşamasında -Asley ve Lee (1987) bu aşamayı “putlaşmış geçmiş” olarak kavramsallaştırmışlardır,- öğrenciler geçmişi anlaşılmaz olarak görmektedirler.
2. “Genellenmiş Kalıp Yargılar”. Bu aşamada geçmişte yaşanmış olaylar, geleneksel stereotiplerin rolleri açısından genel olarak değerlendirilmektedir.
3. “Hergün Empati”. Geçmiş olaylar bugün dünyasının kültürel bağlamı ile karşılaştırılır. Bu karşılaştırma modern ve daha eski görüş ve değerler arasında kalıcı ayrımlar yapılmadan gerçekleştirilir.

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4 Cf. Yılmaz 2007, 332; Barton and Levstik 2008, 278-292, 302; Davis 2001, 4; Portal 1987, 89-90; Little 1983a& 1983a & 1983b, 30-31.

4. “Sınırlandırılmış Tarihsel Empati”. Tanımlamalar geçmişteki insanların bizlerden farklı seviyede bilgiye, farklı görüş ve değerlere sahip olduğunu kabul etmektedir.
5. “Bağlamsal Tarihsel Empati”. Geçmiş olaylar daha geniş bir bağlamanın görüş ve değerleri ile bütünleştirilme sonucunda değerlendirilir.

iii. Sınıf Ortamında Tarihsel Empatiyi Geliştirme

Ashby ve Lee’ye göre (1987, 85-87) öğrencilerin tarihsel empatiyi geliştirmesi; öğrencileri birbirleri ile tartışmaları yönünden cesaretlendirmesi gereken, doğrudan öğretmenin öğrenciyi katı bir biçimde bilgi aktarımını sağlamak yerine bütün sınıfı ya da küçük grupları tarihsel konularda işbirlikli öğrenme temelinde uğraşmalarını sağlayan öğretmenlerden aldıklarıyla çok yakından bağlantılıdır. Öğretmen yapılan yanlışlara yüksek derecede hoşgörü göstermelidir.

Davis’e göre (2011, 4) uygun bir uygulama yaklaşımı; yapılan yanlışları reddetmeyi, olasılıkları görmezden gelmeyi, ya da savunulamaz yorumları kabul etmeyi içermemelidir. Her durumda düş kurma gücü, kanıtlarla kontrol altına alınmış olmalıdır.

iv. Tarihsel Empati ve Drama: Kavramsal Çerçeve

Yukarıda anlatıldığı üzere, eğitimde drama, tarihsel empatinin geliştirilmesinde çok dengeli didaktik bir içerik sağlamaktadır. Fines ve Verrier (1974;89)’in daha önce belirttiği ve diğer drama öğretmenlerinin sıklıkla üzerinde durduğu üzere (Goalen 1995, 65-66; Fairclough 1994; Fleming 1992; Wilson & Woodhouse 1990; Childs & Pond 1990; May & Williams 1987); dramanın sınıfta kullanımı; çalışma grubunun karakteri, öğretmenin destekleyici rolü ve öğrencilerin aşamalı anlama süreci ile karakterize edilmektedir. Bu yüzden eğitimde drama ve tarihsel empati arasındaki bağ görünür bir biçimde sağlamdır.

Thompson (1983; 22), tarihsel empatiyi kaynak kullanılması, ilgili tüm bilgilerin tam olarak belirlenmesi ve deşifre edilmesinde zihinsel becerilerin dâhil edildiği, başarılması mümkün etkinliklerin her saniyesi başına düşen bir amaç olarak tanımlamaktadır. Thompson, aynı çalışmanın başka bir bölümünde ise tarihsel empati yetisinin, drama, rol oynama, oyunlar ve müzik gibi çalışmaları barındıran deneysel çalışmalarla uygun bir biçimde geliştirileceğini iddia etmektedir.

Aynı yıl içerisinde Little (1983a), okullarda drama çalışmalarının tarih öğretisi için değerli olduğunu bilgisini sunmuştu. Bu yolla öğrencilerin; geçmişte yaşanmış olan gerçeklere, kendi hayal güçleri rehberliğinde kimi eylem ve tartışma etkinlikleri ile katılmaya cesaretlendiklerini söylemektedir. Drama çalışmalarında katılımcı bir tavır sergilemek aynı zamanda var olan araştırmanın daha derinlemesine anlaşılmasını teşvik etmektedir.

Aynı cümlelerden yola çıkarak Goalan ve Handy (1993), 49 kişilik bir örneklem grubu ile bir çalışma gerçekleştirmişlerdir. Grup üyelerinden 20 kişi kontrol, 29 kişisi ise deney grubunu temsil etmiştir. Deneysel olarak da kanıtlandığı üzere eğitimde drama teknikleri ile yaklaşılan tarihsel materyallerde öğrencilerin tarihsel düşünme ortalamaları gelişmektedir.

Yukarıda yer alan verilerden yola çıkarak mevcut çalışma, lise birinci sınıflarda tarihsel empatiyi beslemek adına özellikle eğitimde drama teknikleri ile yapılandırılmış çalışmalara odaklanmıştır.

v.Yöntem Bilim

Bu çalışmanın verileri 2011-2012 eğitim öğretim yılında Attica’da yer alan bir lisede yapılan eylem araştırması sonucunda ortaya çıkmıştır. Sonuç olarak aşağıda sunulan veriler ve eylem araştırmasının kendisi; belirli sayıda öğrencilere uygulandığından, buradan çıkan sonuçlara göre öneriler getirdiğinden ve araştırmacının kendi bakış açısı ile değerlendirildiğinden genellenmesi doğru değildir.

Bu eylem araştırmasının örneklemini 22 kişilik lise birinci sınıf öğrencileri oluşturmuştur. Araştırmanın yürütüldüğü lise, Batı Attica’da bulunan bir kent okuludur. Çalışmanın gerçekleştirildiği sınıf: 12 erkek ve 10 kızdan oluşmaktadır. Öğrencilerin milliyete göre dağılımlarına bakıldığında 21 öğrencinin Yunan, 1 öğrencinin Arnavut kökenli olduğu bilgisine ulaşılmıştır.

Bu araştırma projesi ilköğretim tarihlerine ilişkin 45 dakika ile 90 dakika arasında olan 4 farklı eğitim bölümü ile geliştirilmiştir.

Uygulanmış olan eğitim atölyelerinin geliştirilmesi için temel gereksinim; didaktik bir çerçeve ile birleştirilmiş ‘yapılandırılmış yaklaşım’ ilkelerinden, ‘öğrenmenin araştırılması ve sosyokültürel teori’ üzerine temellendirilmiş olmasıdır (Tsakiri & Kapetanidou 2007, 35-42). Uygulanan etkinlikler, sıcak sandalye, toplantılar, uzman mantosu, duvardaki rol, rol oynama, tarihsel rol üzerinden yaratıcı yazma, karakterin nesneleri, dedikodu halkası, öğretmenin role girmesi gibi eğitimde drama tekniklerinin tarih öğretimine uygun bir duruma getirilmesi ile temellendirilmiştir (Belliveau et al. 2008, 5-7; Heathcote 2008; Verrier 2008; Goalen 1995; Goalen & Hendy 1994; Goalen & Hendy 1993; Fines & Verrier 1974).

Veriler toplanırken eylem araştırması ilkeleri göz önünde bulundurulmuştur. Bu doğrultuda özellikle aşağıda yer alan araçlar kullanılmıştır.

- Her eğitsel müdahale sürecine ilişkin gözlem ve ayrıntılı yazı kayıtları.
- Öğrencilerin geçmişte yaşayan insanlara ilişkin empati yetilerini değerlendiren soru ve yanıtların olduğu çalışma kâğıtları.
- Öğrencilerin sınıf içerisindeki etkinliklerini ve yaratıcı ifadelerini tanımlayan metin ve sunumlar.

Bütün bu veriler Ashby ve Lee’nin yukarıda belirtmiş olduğu tarihsel empati aşamalarına göre analiz edilmiştir.

vi. Eğitsel Müdahale

1. Eğitsel Müdahale: Bronz Çağı

Birinci eğitsel müdahale bronz çağı ile ilgilidir. Giriş etkinliği olarak öğrencilere; duvarda yer alan üç farklı büyük kartona çizilmiş birebir insan boyutunda kartlar sunulmuştur. Öğrenciler sadece dış konturla belirlenmiş olan bu insan çiziminden yola çıkarak rol koridoru tekniği ile Yunan adalarında yaşayan üç farklı (Cyclade, Minoa ve Mycenae) adalıyı ayrıntılandırmışlardır. Ardından öğrencilerden 3 gruba ayrılarak seçtikleri role ilişkin uzman mantolarını giymeleri istenmiştir. Öğrencilerin bu aşamadaki görevleri; tarih öncesi Yunan çağlarına ilişkin bir belgesel çekmek isteyen varsayımsal bir film yapımcısına yardımcı olmaktır.

2. Eğitsel Müdahale: İkinci Yunan Kolonizasyonu

İkinci eğitsel müdahale ikinci Hellenik kolonizasyonu ile ilgilidir. Giriş çalışmasında Eski Yunanlıların ne zaman, neden ve nasıl birçok farklı varış yerlerine çekilmiş olduklarına ilişkin bir öyküleme çalışması yapılmıştır. Bu öyküleme çalışması dört farklı grubun oluşması ve bu gruplardan birer liderin koloni kurucusu olması biçiminde sonuçlanmıştır.

Bu ayrıntılandırılmış aşamada: kolonide yaşayan kişilere, kendilerine yeni bir yaşama yeri belirlemeleri gerektiği söylenmiştir. Onları bu duruma iten gerekçeler neler olabilir? Hangi nedenler onları kendi yerli topraklarından ayırmaya itmiştir? gibi soruların yanıtlarını öğrenciler karalarını ve düşüncelerini paylaşarak sunmuşlardır. Kapanış çalışmasında ise öğrenciler kolonilerde yaşayan insanlar olarak kendi deneyimlerini göz önünde bulundurarak yaratıcı yazma çalışmalarında bulunmuşlardır. Bu doğrultuda “Yirmi yıl sonra ikinci yurdumuzda... -Gerçekten buna değdi mi? -Yaşamım daha iyi yönde mi değişti?” gibi sorulara yanıt vermişlerdir.

3. Eğitsel Müdahale: Solon Yasaları

Üçüncü eğitsel müdahalede Solon Yasaları’na değinilmiştir. Isınma çalışması sayılabilecek bir doğaçlama etkinliği gerçekleştirilmiştir. Öğrenciler Draco yasalarının konulmasından 30 yıl sonra Atina’da yaşayan, borç batağına saplanmış zavallı Atinalılar olarak bozulmuş hakların ölçüsü hakkında kendi aralarında konuşmaktadırlar. Rol oynamalar yolu ile her öğrenci çalışmalarını gerçekleştirir. Bu çalışmanın sonlarına doğru öğrencilerden var olan bu durumu farklı açılardan değerlendirmeleri istenir. “Eğer parası olmayan köylüler olsaydınız. Eğer aristokrat olsaydınız ya da halkın yaşadığı sorunlarla ilgilenmeyen birisi olsaydınız Solon’a ne söylerdiniz?” soruları 3 farklı rol üzerinden tartışılmıştır.

4. Eğitsel Müdahale: Peisistratus’tan Cleisthenes’e

Dördüncü eğitsel müdahale Peisistratus ve Cleisthenes’in getirdiği yenilikler ile ilgilidir. Giriş çalışmaları öğrencilere Milattan önce 520 yılının Antik Atina’sına ilişkin zaman-uzamsal bir bakış açısı kazandıracak etkinlikleri barındırmaktadır. O dönemin Atinalılarını canlandıran öğrenciler Peisistratus kurallarının olumlu ve olumsuz noktalarını değerlendirmişlerdir. Öğrenciler komplocu rolüne bürünüp kendi aralarında tartışmışlardır. Bu tartışma sonucunda öğrencilerden Peisistratus’u devirip devirmeyecekleri konusunda bir karara varmaları istenmiştir. Bu kararlarını ve argümanlarını bir sunumla anlatmışlardır.

Ardından elçi rolünde bir öğrenci Cleisthenes’in sesli bir biçimde okur ve öğrenciler dedikodu halkası biçimini alırlar. Öğrenciler bu dedikoduyu gerçekleştirirken öğretmen Atinalı bir kadın rolüne girerek ‘Herodot’un Tarihi’ kaynağında yer alan öyküyü temel alarak Cleisthenes’in Tiranların torunu olduğu söylentisini yaymıştır. Çalışmanın bu kısmında öğrenciler bu tarih öyküsünde yer alan insanlar olarak Cleisthenes’in yeniliklerini değerlendiren bir yazı çalışmasında bulunarak düşüncelerini dile getirmişlerdir.

vii. Veri Analizi

Birinci eğitsel müdahale süresince öğrenciler kendi bilgilerini yeterli derecede eleştirel bir biçimde uyarılama konusunda sorunlar yaşamışlardır. Yoğunlukla şimdiki zamanda olan düşünce ve davranışlarını o tarihsel zamana yansıtma eğiliminde olmuşlardır. Sadece bir bölümde çok derine inmeden o dönemin tarihsel şartları ile uyum gösterebilecek sınırlı bir tarihsel empati

gösterdikleri söylenebilir: “*Bu kadını seçtik çünkü muhtemelen o dönemlerde toplum, ana-erkek bir yapıdaydı ve çocuk doğurmak gizemli bir işlemdi. Bundan dolayı o dönemde yapılmış bir çok kadın heykelleri bulunmaktadır.*” Ya da “*O zamanların önemli insanlarından birisi olduğu için Anax karakterini seçtik. Katı ve düşmanları korkutup, etkileyecek kadar büyük bir insandı*”

Az derecede tarihsel empati görülmüş olmasına rağmen öğrenciler bu etkinliklerin oldukça eğlenceli olduklarını dile getirmişlerdir: “*Gerçek uzmanlar gibi hissettik... Gerçekleri uyarlayarak öğrendiklerimizi daha iyi anlayabileceğimizin farkına vardık.*”

Gerçekten de ikinci eğitsel müdahale süresince öğrenciler yaşlarına göre daha yüksek ve tatmin edici bir “sınırlandırılmış tarihsel empati” aşamasına ulaşmışlardır. Muhtemelen bu durumu sağlayan neden çalışmalarda yer alan İkinci Yunan Kolonizasyonu çalışmalarının içinde yer alan karar verme anlarının olmasıdır. “*Yurt edindiğimiz alan doğal kaynaklar açısından çok zengindi. Balıkçılık, metaller ve verimli topraklar birçok becerimizin gelişmesini sağladı. Bu doğal kaynaklar aynı zamanda ticareti geliştirmemize yardımcı oldu. Çok tanınan insanlar olduk ve ekonomimiz büyüdü.*”, “*Kendi yurdumuzda ekonomi çöktü. İnsanların birçoğu yurtlarını değiştirerek kendilerine daha zengin doğal kaynakların olduğu daha iyi topraklar bulmak zorunda kaldılar.*”

İkinci eğitimsel müdahale ile öğrenciler; geçmişte yaşayan insanların karmaşık süreçlerde, özellikle amaçlarını ve düşlerini daha iyi bir biçimde anlamışlardır.

Üçüncü eğitsel müdahale süresince bütün öğrenciler “sınırlandırılmış tarihsel empati” aşamasına ulaşmışlardır. Bununla beraber öğrenciler; bizlere sunulan toplumlarda yaşanan aynı tarihsel olayın farklı rolleri olan insanlar tarafından nasıl farklı tepkileri tetiklediği gerçeğini daha iyi kavramışlardır. Böylece geçmişte gerçekleşen bir eylemi anlamak için gerekli bir önkoşul yerine getirilmiştir.

Çiftçi: “*Çok iyi yaptınız, tebrikler! Doğru kararları alarak bizleri uzun zamandan bu yana ezen aristokratların boyunduruğundan kurtardınız.*”

Soylu Kişi: “*Uyarlamış olduğunuz bu kurallardan dolayı mutsuz ve kızgınım. Bizlerin sosyal sınıftaki zayıflatıp, azalttınız.*”

Dördüncü eğitsel müdahale öğrencileri, “Geniş bağlamsal Empati” kavramının farkındalığına daha çok yaklaştırmıştır. Bu durum canlandırma yapmış oldukları tarihsel bölümlerde, gerçekleri ve kararlaştırılan kanunları birbirine daha iyi kaynaştırmalarını sağlamıştır. Bir başka ilginç nokta ise öğrencilerin yenilik getiren liderlerin rolleri ile yapmış oldukları farklı durumların onları daha ileri tartışmalara götürmesi olmuştur.

viii. Sonuçlar

Bu araştırma, eğitimde dramının lise öğrencilerinde tarihsel empatiyi artırma yolunda etkin bir yöntem olduğunu tartışmayı amaçlamıştır. Lee ve Ashby’nin aşamalandırma sistemi dikkate alındığında bu çalışmanın her eğitsel müdahale evresinde yüksek derecede tarihsel empati görülmemiştir. Buna rağmen bütün öğrenciler geçmişe ilişkin empatik yaklaşımlarında takdir edilecek bir gelişim göstermişlerdir.

Aynı zamanda yapılandırılmış müdahaleler göstermiştir ki: eğitimde drama ilkelerine göre yapılandırılmış etkinlikler; öğrencilerin geçmişe ilişkin gerçek boyutları anlamaları adına ve tarihsel empatiyi temelden geliştirmeleri adına güçlü ve uyandırıcı bir potansiyele sahiptir.

Bir başka ilginç sonuç yapılandırılmış müdahalelerin, drama teknikleri sayesinde öğrenci merkezli bir ortam yaratmasıdır. Öğrencilerin kendi kişisel akademik performanslarını etkileyen düşüncelerini ifade etmede özgür bir ortam yaratmış ve geçmişe ilişkin yanlış yapma korkusunun ortadan kalktığı bir tarihsel empati temeli oluşmasını sağlamıştır.

Sonuç olarak araştırmada yapılan müdahalelerin etkililiği göstermiştir ki: öğrencilerin tarihsel empati edinme yolunda etkin bir katkısı olan eğitimde drama ilkeleri ile temellendirilmiş eğitim senaryoları, öğretmen tarafından dikkatlice organize edilmeli ve basit bir biçimde yapılandırılmalıdır.

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