

DRAMATIC ART AND DRAMATIC EXPRESSION THROUGH CREATIVE DRAMA METHODS IN PRESCHOOL EDUCATION

^aIVANA ROCHOVSKÁ, ^bBOŽENA ŠVÁBOVÁ

^{a,b}*Catholic University in Ružomberok, Faculty of Education, Juraj Páleš Institute in Levoča, Bottova 15, 054 01 Levoča email: ^aikrupova@gmail.com, ^bbozenasvab@gmail.com,*

The research was done as part of KEGA project No. 016KU-4/2020 "The Applying of Creative Drama Methods in the Process of Preschool Education".

Abstract: The research focuses on determining the opinions of kindergarten teachers on the issue of applying dramatic expression in preschool education within five dimensions - the current state of the use of dramatic art and dramatic expression through creative drama methods within preschool education, drawing ideas for working with a work of dramatic art, an assessment of the children's interest in working with a work of dramatic art by the kindergarten teachers, the relationship of kindergarten teachers towards dramatic art, and the opportunities for kindergarten teachers to acquire knowledge of dramatic art and creative drama within their undergraduate training or other forms of education. 366 kindergarten teachers responded to the items of the self-constructed questionnaire. It has been shown that the current state of the use of dramatic art and dramatic expression through creative drama methods in preschool education can be described as slightly above average. The opportunities for kindergarten teachers to acquire knowledge of dramatic art and creative drama in their undergraduate training or other forms of education were below average. The relationship of kindergarten teachers towards dramatic art can also be described as lower than average. The research clearly confirmed that the opportunities for acquiring knowledge from dramatic art and creative drama statistically significantly positively predict the relationship of kindergarten teachers towards dramatic art. Likewise, it was confirmed that the relationship of kindergarten teachers towards dramatic art statistically significantly positively predicts the use of works of dramatic art through creative drama methods in preschool education.

Keywords: dramatic art, dramatic expression, creative drama, kindergarten teacher, preschool education

1 Introduction

For centuries, didactics has been concerned with the issue of teaching methods at all levels of education, including preschool. Here, it is essential to develop in a balanced way all aspects of the child's personality, and to not only focus on the cognitive side at the expense of the socio-emotional and psychomotor side. A child coming into the school environment discovers himself in active activities, his surroundings and the world, and acquires skills and experience in cooperation with the group, developing the ability of contact and communication. Therefore, in the process of preschool education, an emphasis is placed on the application of activating methods. In this process, encountering art at the level of reception, perception and interpretation, also plays a big role (Rochovská et al., 2021; Rochovská, Švábová, 2021; Kováčová, Ševčovič, Valachová, 2021).

Activating methods (Droščák, 2014) also include creative drama methods (Knapíková, Kostrub, Miňová, 2002). Several definitions of the term creative drama can be found within the professional literature. A common feature is that it is about education with the goal of a free and comprehensive development of the child's personality, who has the opportunity to perceive and get to know the external and internal world through active methods (Švábová, 2013; Rochovská et al., 2021).

Research by A. Tombak (2014) focused on the importance of applying elements of drama in preschool education. Applying the elements of drama can be considered a very important way of expressing personal feelings, improving children's imagination and the child's ability to act independently, and improving social and cooperative skills. That is why the role of dramatic education¹ in the upbringing and education of preschool children has been strongly emphasised.

Further research, applying a qualitative approach to a sample of ten children over two weeks, was conducted with the goal of

examining how the implementation of creative drama as a didactic tool affects classroom processes. It was found that the application of creative drama contributed to classroom cohesion and had a positive effect on the children's behaviour. Thus, the importance of applying creative drama as a didactic tool in education was emphasised (Azlina et al., 2021).

In connection with creative drama and the development of creativity, the research of T. Toivanen et al. (2013) can be given attention. The results showed that group creativity, in particular, has great potential for its collective character in coming up with new ideas. New ideas and inventions sooner arise in a group, when the observation of group members can lead to the new ideas of its members. The active process of creative drama always involves creative thinking as part of the creative process. In fact, creative drama provides suitable opportunities to support the children's creativity. It develops not only the individual, but also group creativity within the school environment. It offers an experience to enrich the children's imagination, as well as improving the children's group interaction skills and the children's social skills. Therefore, the role of the teachers is to support this educational process and create opportunities for the development of creativity, using creative drama methods.

Similarly, developing the creativity of children aged four to six years through creative drama methods was addressed by the authors S. Momeni et al. (2017). In a sample of 52 children, they compared the differences between an experimental group, in which creative drama methods were applied for two-months, and a control group, during which time the researchers used the creativity test of Jean-Louis Cellier. The test consisted of examining verbal creativity, the assembling and interpreting of pictures, fluency, flexibility, originality and elaboration. The increase in the level of creativity in the experimental group was statistically significant compared to the control group, which proved the positive effect of the application of creative drama methods on the improvement of creativity among children of a preschool age.

The results of the research, focused on the effectiveness of creative drama in developing social and communication skills (Erbay, Sunay, 2010), have shown that children with learning difficulties have improved social and communication skills by applying creative drama methods. The authors of the research study recommended the inclusion of creative drama courses for preschool teachers, where creative drama would be presented in more detail in order to find a new application within pedagogical practice. They also recommended that teachers have books, materials and CDs available with dramatic activities for the teachers.

A survey of the views of kindergarten teachers on the application of creative drama in educational practice was carried out through a questionnaire within Slovakia, in the years 2011 to 2012 (Švábová, 2013). The research analysed the opportunities for using creative drama in preschool and primary education from the perspective of the teachers. The teachers stated that they had encountered creative drama at a professional level, especially during their university studies, methodological meetings and within the professional press. They considered their awareness of creative drama to be "good". In their educational practice, they commented mainly on the application of dramatization, improvisation, interpretation, dramatic plays and musical-expression studies. More than half of the teachers stated that they use creative drama as an interesting activity in the afternoon period. Half of the teachers commented on its application within the morning didactic activities. The research has confirmed that according to the opinions of the teachers, creative drama methods have a great influence on the personal development of children, they create a space for social communication, and they influence the emotional sphere, will and character traits. They

¹ The terms dramatic education and creative drama can be used synonymously. For example, in the Slovak language environment, the term dramatic education was used first, but later the term changed to creative drama, because it emphasised more the essence of a creative activity.

expressed an interest in further education within the field of creative drama.

The authors D. Kollárová and L. Fenyvesiová (2013) state that the use of creative drama in preschool education provides scope for an adequate and natural approach to upbringing and education, whereby the subject of creative drama may prepare the future kindergarten teacher for this kind of approach. The applied pedagogical research was carried out on a sample of 225 students of teaching and non-teaching bachelor's degree programs, in order to find out to what extent the students of the teaching departments attach the importance of training in the field of creative drama, and in which areas this subject can enrich the competencies of future teachers and after-school teachers. In their statements, the students agreed that the subject of creative drama enriched them not only in terms of personality, but also in terms of professionalism. They were aware of the importance of play and its effect on children at a preschool age and also that play is the most natural activity at this age. In evaluation of the subject of creative drama, the students' opinions were also heard, that their training enriched them not only in terms of the content and procedures, but also through the personality of the teacher who, in their view, plays a significant role in this approach. From the research findings, it is further noteworthy that after completing the subject of dramatic education, 85.77% of students agreed that creative drama is a necessary part of teacher training (and not only for kindergartens).

1.1 Researched Issue

Much of this research has confirmed that the inclusion of the stimuli of dramatic art or dramatic expression, especially through the creative drama methods, has a positive effect on children and brings with it several benefits. However, it requires that it be led by a teacher who is equally competent in both pedagogy and art. The question can be asked whether kindergarten teachers feel competent in this respect and to what extent they classify dramatic art and its stimuli, dramatic expression through creative drama methods, into educational activities in kindergartens.² Therefore, the research problem has become an examination of the kindergarten teachers' views on the use of dramatic art and dramatic expression through creative drama methods in preschool education. The research problem also arose from the experience of researchers in the field.

1.2 The Aim and Hypotheses of the Research

The main aim of the research was to find out the opinions of kindergarten teachers on the use of dramatic art/dramatic expression and creative drama methods in preschool education, and to suggest ways to improve it. The objective of the research resulted in sub-objectives:

1. To determine, based on self-reflection, whether teachers use works of dramatic art through creative drama methods in pre-primary education and how often.
2. To determine from where they draw ideas for working with works of dramatic art.
3. To determine how kindergarten teachers evaluate the children's interest in working with works of dramatic art.
4. To determine what is the relationship kindergarten teachers have towards dramatic art.

5. To determine what kind of opportunities kindergarten teachers have to acquire knowledge of dramatic art and creative drama in their undergraduate training or other forms of education.
6. To determine whether the opportunities for acquiring knowledge of dramatic art and creative drama among kindergarten teachers predict the level of their relationship towards dramatic art.
7. To determine whether the level of the respondents' relationship towards dramatic art predicts the use of dramatic art/dramatic expression through creative drama methods in pre-primary education.

The sub-objectives were reflected in the following research questions and research hypotheses. In the case that the researchers had no support in the literature, in other research and in their own experience, the following research questions were formulated:

1. What is the state and frequency of using dramatic art/dramatic expression through creative drama methods in preschool education?
2. Where do teachers draw ideas from for working with works of dramatic art?
3. How do kindergarten teachers evaluate the children's interest in working with works of dramatic art?
4. What were the opportunities for kindergarten teachers to acquire knowledge of dramatic art and creative drama in their undergraduate training or other forms of education?
5. What is the relationship of kindergarten teachers towards dramatic art?

Based on experience in the field and the previous empirical experience of the researchers, the following hypotheses were formulated:

1. The opportunities for acquiring knowledge from dramatic art and creative drama among kindergarten teachers predict the level of their relationship towards dramatic art.
2. The level of the respondents' relationship towards dramatic art predicts the use of dramatic art/dramatic expression through creative drama methods in pre-primary education.

2 Research Methodology

2.1 General Background

From 2019 to 2021, a national project entitled "Artists in the Kindergarten - Interpretation of a Work of Art in Pre-Primary Education" was implemented in Slovakia. The project was focused on determining the views of kindergarten teachers about the current state of the interpretation of works of art in pre-primary education and on determining the relationship of kindergarten teachers towards art and their opportunities to acquire knowledge of the history and theory of art in their undergraduate training or other forms of education. The project focused on fine/visual arts, musical arts, literary arts and dramatic arts. Since 2022, this project was followed by another national project, which has focused on dramatic expression and creative drama methods. In addition to acquiring other data related to the subject matter, the raw results obtained during the years 2019 to 2021 were further analysed and interpreted.

2.2 Instruments and Procedures

The tasks of the research were concerned with the development of a research tool to determine the views of kindergarten teachers on the use of the interpretation of a work of art in preschool education. The first part of the questionnaire (part A) was concerned with the respondents' views on the current state of the use of art in preschool education, drawing ideas for working with dramatic art, as well as the teachers' opinions on the children's interest in working with a work of dramatic art, especially creative drama methods. In the second part (part B), the respondents' opportunities to learn/acquire knowledge of art history and theory were examined. In the third part (Part C), the

² During the examination of the teachers' opinions, it was necessary to distinguish between the concepts of dramatic art, dramatic expression and creative drama. Dramatic art means drama as one of the literary types (the literary type can be adapted for dramatic realisation), where the main artistic material is language, usually in the form of dialogue, which carries dramatic conflict. Dramatic art is collective and integrates several types of art – musical, visual, verbal, motion. This understanding of dramatic art in the sense of high art (which is intended for cultural elites and where its creators are experienced professionals) may occur within the kindergarten, e.g. when visiting the theatre, when inviting professional theatres to the kindergarten or during a video projection of works of dramatic art or their excerpts in terms of the initiation of follow-up, especially creative activities. When using the stimuli of dramatic art in kindergartens, we are talking more about dramatic expression. One of the activating methods which uses the elements of drama is creative drama. In kindergartens, it represents a complex of dramatic activities which can be applied within all children's activities.

respondents' relationship towards art was determined. Within most items, the respondents commented specifically on fine/visual arts, musical arts, literary arts and dramatic arts. The subject of processing the research study has become the field of dramatic art, or dramatic expression and the use of creative drama methods. The fourth part of the questionnaire (part D) consisted of sociodemographic items.

The questionnaire contained a total of 32 items related to dramatic art and creative drama methods, while it was possible to obtain a maximum of 49 points for the completed scored items.

The individual items have been scored. The first research question could be answered based on the answers to the first two items (Table 1). In Part A, in the first semi-closed item, the respondents answered whether they use works of art, or their reproductions, in educational activities with the children, while choosing from the options a) paintings, sculptures, b) musical compositions, c) theatrical performances, d) literary works, e) other, and they were asked to indicate specifically which one for each option. For each given "theatrical performances" answer, the respondent could get one point.

In the second scored single choice item, the respondents indicated how often they include work with a work of art within kindergarten educational activities in the field of dramatic art/expression. They were choosing from the options, according to which they also received scores for the answers: a) every day (5 points), b) at least once a week (4 points), c) at least once a month (3 points), d) at least once every six months (2 points), e) at least once per year (1 point), f) not at all (0 points), g) another answer (they were supposed to state specifically, while being scored individually with a maximum possible number of 5 points).

Table 1: Scoring summary for individual questions in part A - Status and frequency of the use of dramatic art/dramatic expression through creative drama methods in pre-primary education

| Number and focus of questions | Maximum number of points |
|--|--------------------------|
| 1. the use of a work of art - theatrical performances | 1 |
| 2. the frequency of classifying works of dramatic art into education | 5 |
| Total | 6 |

The third item is a multiple choice item which is aimed at drawing on the respondents' ideas for working with a work of art, in the field of dramatic art/expression. The following options were available: a) from literature, b) from the Internet, c) from colleagues, d) from conferences and professional seminars and workshops, e) from various forms of continual education, f) I created my own, g) another answer (they were supposed to specify which). One point was awarded for each option specified.

In the following semi-closed item, the respondents stated whether they have enough sufficient methodological materials and publications related to dramatic art/expression in their kindergarten. They were supposed to mark one of the options: a) yes, b) no, c) another answer (they were supposed to specify). They received one point for each answer marked "yes". Option c) was scored individually, but they could get a maximum of one point (Table 2). In order to obtain a more objective picture about the sufficiency of publications with the aforementioned focus, the respondents were supposed to state the approximate number of publications available in the kindergarten.

Table 2: Scoring summary for individual questions in part A - drawing ideas for working with a work of dramatic art

| Question number | Maximum number of points |
|--|--------------------------|
| 3. Sources for drawing ideas for working with a work of dramatic art | 7 |
| 4. the availability of methodological materials | 1 |
| Total | 8 |

In another single choice selection item, the respondents stated how interested the children are in working with a work of dramatic art within educational activities (Table 3). They were choosing from options, according to which they also obtained scores for the answers: a) great interest (4 points), b) interest (3 points), c) neither interest nor disinterest (2 points), d) mostly disinterest (1 point), total disinterest (0 points).

Table 3: Scoring summary for individual questions in part A - the teachers' opinions on the children's interest in working with a work of dramatic art

| Question number | Maximum number of points |
|--|--------------------------|
| 5. Children's interest in the field of art | 4 |

For Part B - the opportunities for teachers to learn/acquire knowledge from dramatic art and creative drama, the respondent could get a maximum of 12 points (Table 4). In Part B, the scoring of answers in the questionnaire was designed so that the more points the respondent obtained, the more opportunities for education in the field of dramatic art and creative drama (knowledge, practical artistic activity, theoretical, methodological and practical ideas for carrying out activities with children in the kindergarten connected with dramatic expression and creative drama methods).

The first scored multiple choice item focused on the self-reflection of the respondents' opportunities to acquire knowledge from creative drama during their studies. They were choosing from options, according to which they also obtained scores for the answers: a) excellent (4 points), b) very good (3 points), c) good (2 points), d) sufficient (1 point), e) insufficient (0 points). In the second multiple choice item, the respondents were asked to mention some specific disciplines which they had completed in secondary school or university, in the field of dramatic art. They were choosing from options, according to which they also obtained scores for the answers: a) yes, during secondary school studies (1 point), b) yes, during university studies (1 point), c) no (0 points), d) I do not remember (0 points).

The third scored semi-closed item focused on determining whether the respondents acquired knowledge from the history and theory of dramatic art, even after completing undergraduate training in the form of continuous, or non-formal or informal education (various courses, workshops, conferences, etc.). They were choosing from options, according to which they also obtained scores for the answers: a) yes, in the form of continuous education (1 point), b) yes, in the form of non-formal education (e.g. courses, workshops) (1 point), c) yes, in the form of informal education (spontaneously acquired knowledge) (1 point), d) no (0 points), e) other answer (they were supposed to state specifically, while being scored individually, with a maximum possible number of acquired points of 1).

In the following item, the respondents were supposed to indicate whether they have completed any courses, workshops or seminars aimed at getting acquainted with dramatic art or practical artistic activities, (e.g. theatre courses...). They were given one point for answering "yes".

In another item, the respondents were supposed to state whether they had completed any courses, workshops or seminars focused on theoretical, methodological or practical topics, on how to implement activities with children in the kindergarten which are

focused on getting to know works of art, namely in the field of dramatic art. They were given one point for answering "yes".

Table 4: Scoring summary for individual questions in Part B - opportunities for kindergarten teachers to acquire knowledge of dramatic art and creative drama in their undergraduate training or other forms of education

| Question number | Maximum number of points |
|---|--------------------------|
| 1. opportunities to acquire knowledge of dramatic art and creative drama | 4 |
| 2. completed disciplines during secondary school and university studies | 2 |
| 3. acquisition of knowledge through continuous, non-formal and informal learning | 4 |
| 4. completion of courses, workshops or seminars focused on getting to know dramatic art and practical artistic skills | 1 |
| 5. completion of courses, workshops or seminars focused on theoretical, methodological or practical topics for the use of dramatic expression and creative drama in kindergartens | 1 |
| Total | 12 |

For Part C - the relationship of the kindergarten teachers towards dramatic art, the respondent could acquire a maximum of 19 points (Table 5). The scoring of the answers in the questionnaire in Part C was designed so that the more points the respondent obtained, the more important dramatic art is for her, and the more active she is in dramatic art, not only passively as a recipient, but also actively.

In the first multiple choice item, the respondents answered whether they considered dramatic art to be significant in their lives. They were choosing from options, according to which they also obtained scores for the answers: a) very significant (4 points), b) significant (3 points), c) partly significant (2 points), d) mostly insignificant (1 point), e) not significant at all (0 points).

The second multiple choice item focused on how often the respondents attend different institutions and performances - theatrical performances, ballet/musical/opera/opera. They were choosing from options, according to which they also obtained scores for answers: a) at least once a week (4 points), b) at least once per month (3 points), c) at least once every half a year (2 points), d) at least once per year (1 point), e) never (0 points).

In the third semi-closed item, the respondents had to circle the statements which best describe themselves: The subject of the scoring was the marking of the statement: d) I own video recordings of theatrical performances. One point was awarded for each marked statement.

The fourth multiple choice item was focused on whether the respondents were actively involved in artistic creation, marking one option for each question. They were awarded points for answering the question "Do you act in plays?" a) yes often (2 points), b) yes occasionally (1 point), c) never (0 points).

Table 5: Scoring summary for individual questions in part C - the relationship of the teachers towards:

| Question number | Maximum number of points |
|---|--------------------------|
| 1. the importance of dramatic art in the life of the teachers | 4 |
| 2. the visits to institutions or events | 12 |
| 3. the ownership of video recordings of theatrical performances | 1 |
| 4. the active artistic/aesthetic creation of | 2 |

| | |
|--------------|-----------|
| the teachers | |
| Total | 19 |

2.3 Sample Selection

Teachers who showed a willingness to participate in the research were chosen for the selection sample; therefore, it represents an available selection. A total of 377 questionnaires were received (via Google.Docs and in paper form) and, after the exclusion of any duplicate answers and blank questionnaires, the file was examined and found to have a size of 366 kindergarten teachers. Of these 96.2% were female respondents and 0.3% were male, which also corresponds to the sample of the basic group in terms of gender. The age ranged from 20 years to 64 years, the average age is 42.75 years ($SD = 11.79$). In the sample, half of the teachers are 42 years of age or younger and the other half are more than 42 years old ($Mdn = 42$). The most common value is 50 years of age ($n = 16$).

The number of years of pedagogical praxis ranged from 0 years to 46 years, the average number of years of praxis is 19.64 years ($SD = 14.29$).

The sample includes half of the teachers who reported their years of experience to be 18 years and less, and the other half reported more than 18 years of experience ($Mdn = 18$). The most common value is the number of years of experience as 1 year ($n = 22$). The research sample consisted of 57.9% of teachers from urban kindergartens, 36.3% of teachers from rural kindergartens and 5.7% of the respondents did not state the type of school by location. The vast majority of respondents (91.3%) worked in state kindergartens, 2.2% in private, 1.6% in church and 4.9% of respondents did not comment on the type of school regarding the founder.

2.4 Data Analysis

Data analysis took place in the statistical program Jamovi 2.3.2. Descriptive statistics (absolute frequencies, relative frequencies, mean, standard deviation, median, minimum, maximum) were used. A linear regression analysis was chosen for testing the hypotheses.

3 Research Results

3.1 The use of dramatic art/dramatic expression through creative drama methods in pre-primary education

The respondents commented on the use of works of art or their reproductions in educational activities with the children (Table 6). The question was a multiple choice item.

Table 6: Statements of kindergarten teachers on the use of works of art/reproductions within educational activities

| works of art/reproductions | n | % |
|----------------------------|-----|-------|
| paintings, sculptures | 149 | 40.7% |
| musical compositions | 296 | 81.4% |
| theatrical performances | 220 | 60.9% |
| literary works/texts | 297 | 81.7% |
| other | 14 | 3.8% |
| without answers | 4 | 1.1% |

Almost two thirds of teachers (60.9%) commented on the use of dramatic art/expression. In the given question, the answers of the respondents can also be considered from the point of view that 146 respondents (39.1%) did not comment at all on the use of theatrical performances and 69 respondents (18.3%) did not comment on the use of literary works at all. The non-use of literary works in kindergartens can be considered inadmissible from the point of view of pre-primary didactics. Unless the respondents did not consider literary works to be works of art intended for children.

The respondents also commented on the frequency of using work with a work of dramatic art within educational activities in

kindergartens (Tab. 7). It was a closed multiple choice item. Based on self-reflection, working with a work of dramatic art is most often used by teachers at least once per month (36.1%) and at least once a week (35.2%).

Table 7: Frequency of the use of working with a work of dramatic art

| | every day | at least once a week | at least once per month | at least once every half a year | at least once per year | not at all |
|-----------------------------------|-----------|----------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------------|------------------------|------------|
| n | 30 | 129 | 132 | 30 | 8 | 5 |
| % | 8.2% | 35.2% | 36.1% | 8.2% | 2.2% | 1.4% |
| 32 teachers (8.7%) did not answer | | | | | | |

The current state of use of dramatic art given by both questions was quantified into one variable. On average, teachers use dramatic art more than the average of the scale (Table 8).

Table 8: Description of the current state of use of dramatic art by kindergarten teachers

| n | M | Md | SD | min | max |
|----------|----------|-----------|-----------|------------|------------|
| 366 | 4.6 | 5 | 1.75 | 0 | 7 |

3.2 Drawing ideas for working with a work of dramatic art

The respondents also commented on drawing ideas for working with a work of dramatic art (Table 9). It was a multiple choice item.

Table 9: Drawing ideas for working with a work of dramatic art

| | from literature | from the Internet | from colleagues | from conferences, professional seminars, workshops | from various forms of continuous education | I create my own |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------|-------------------|-----------------|--|--|-----------------|
| n | 209 | 211 | 94 | 75 | 73 | 113 |
| % | 57.1% | 57.7% | 25.7% | 20.5% | 19.9% | 30.9% |
| 36 teachers did not answer (9.8%) | | | | | | |

Based on the self-reflection of teachers, more than half of them most often draw ideas for working with works of dramatic art from the Internet (57.7%), but also from literature (57.1%) and almost a third of teachers (30.9%) create their own. A quarter of teachers (25.7%) take ideas from colleagues and a fifth from conferences, seminars or workshops (20.5%) or from other forms of continuous education (19.9%).

It is a great advantage for a kindergarten teacher if her own imagination, experience and creativity allow her to create activities with the application of various types of art directly "tailored" towards specific children. Teachers who have a relationship towards dramatic art, but also teachers who address it but feel less competent in the field, can take advantage of visiting theatres as part of school trips and excursions, as well as inviting various theatre ensembles directly to the kindergarten. 0.8% of the respondents commented on this. It is helpful for the teacher to receive professional advice on the quality of a given theatre ensemble or performance.

The respondents stated whether they had enough methodological materials within their kindergarten to work with a work of art (Table 10). It was a closed multiple choice item.

Table 10: Sufficient/insufficient methodological materials for working with a work of dramatic art

| | yes | no | I don't work with this kind of art | without an answer |
|----------|-------|-------|------------------------------------|-------------------|
| n | 196 | 133 | 1 | 36 |
| % | 53.6% | 36.3% | 0.3% | 9.8% |

According to more than half of the teachers (56.3%), there is enough materials in their kindergarten to work with a work of dramatic art. The answers can be seen from the point of view that, according to 36.6% of respondents, they do not have enough methodological materials in the field of dramatic art. The respondents were also asked to indicate the approximate numbers of methodological materials for each type of art (Table 11).

Table 11: The approximate numbers of methodological materials given by the respondents³

| n | M | Mdn | Mo | SD | min | max |
|----------|----------|------------|-----------|-----------|------------|------------|
| 366 | 7.4 | 3 | 3 | 21.4 | 0 | 200 |

On average, the methodological materials are represented by 7.4 pieces, but a more concise value is the median of 3, which means that half of the teachers reported the number of methodological materials in the kindergarten as 3 and more, and half of the teachers as less than 3.

3.3 An evaluation of the children's interest in working with a work of dramatic art by kindergarten teachers

The respondents assessed the children's interest in working with a work of art as part of educational activities. (Table 12) It was a closed multiple choice item.

Table 12: Statements by kindergarten teachers on the children's interest in working with works of dramatic art

| | a great interest | interest | neither interest nor disinterest | mostly disinterest | absolute disinterest |
|-----------------------------------|------------------|----------|----------------------------------|--------------------|----------------------|
| n | 201 | 107 | 19 | 3 | 1 |
| % | 54.9% | 29.2% | 5.2% | 0.8% | 0.3% |
| 35 teachers did not answer (9.6%) | | | | | |

More than half of the teachers (54.9%) thought that the children were very interested in working with a work of dramatic art, and almost a third of the teachers (29.2%) spoke about the interest of the children.

3.4 Opportunities for kindergarten teachers to acquire knowledge of dramatic art and creative drama in their undergraduate training or in other forms of education

In the first item, the teachers had to evaluate on the scale their opportunities to acquire knowledge of dramatic art and creative drama (Table 13).

Table 13: Respondents evaluate the opportunities for acquiring knowledge of the theory and history of art

| | excellent | very good | good | sufficient | insufficient |
|---------------------------------|-----------|-----------|-------|------------|--------------|
| n | 57 | 97 | 104 | 50 | 25 |
| % | 15.6% | 26.5% | 28.4% | 13.7% | 6.8% |
| 33 teachers did not answer (9%) | | | | | |

Almost a third of the teachers (28.4%) rated the opportunities of acquiring knowledge of dramatic art as good and almost half of

³ The mean and standard deviation values are affected by high values, of which there are only a few.

the teachers (42.1%) considered them to be very good to excellent.

The respondents further stated in the questionnaire whether they remember some specific disciplines focused on dramatic art and expression within secondary school and university (Table 14). It was a multiple choice item.

Table 14: Respondents' statements on completed disciplines/ subjects/courses within dramatic art/expression during their studies

| | yes, during secondary school studies | yes, during university studies | no | I don't remember |
|---|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------|------|------------------|
| n | 165 | 104 | 25 | 52 |
| % | 45.1% | 28.4% | 6.8% | 14.2% |
| 60 teachers did not answer (16.4%) and a total of 306 teachers did answer (83.6%) | | | | |

More than two-thirds of kindergarten teachers completed dramatic art disciplines during either secondary school or university studies.

The respondents commented on whether they acquired knowledge of dramatic art and creative drama also after completing undergraduate training in the form of continuous or non-formal or informal education (various courses, workshops, conferences, etc.). It was a closed multiple choice item (Table 15).

Table 15: Respondents' statements on the acquisition of knowledge of dramatic art and creative drama in the form of continuous, non-formal or informal education

| | yes, in the form of continuous education | yes, in the form of non-formal education (e.g. courses, workshops) | yes, in the form of informal learning (spontaneously acquired knowledge) | no |
|------------------------------------|--|--|--|-------|
| n | 52 | 57 | 70 | 137 |
| % | 14.2% | 15.6% | 19.1% | 37.4% |
| 72 teachers did not answer (19.7%) | | | | |

Obtaining experience after completing undergraduate training was either in the form of continuous education (14.2%), or non-formal education (15.6%) and informal education (19.1%). Most often the teachers only mentioned one form of education, and a combination of two or three forms appeared in only 6.1% of cases.

The respondents stated whether they had attended any courses, workshops or seminars aimed at familiarising themselves with art or practical artistic activities (e.g. courses in painting, ceramics, dance, theatre...). It was a closed question (Table 16).

Table 16: Courses, workshops and seminars aimed at familiarising themselves with dramatic art or practical artistic/aesthetic activities presented by the respondents

| frequency | | | relative frequency % | | |
|-----------|-----|-------|----------------------|-------|-------|
| yes | no | total | yes | no | total |
| 43 | 130 | 173 | 11.7% | 35.5% | 47.3% |

It can be stated that according to the respondents, they attended courses, workshops or seminars aimed at familiarising themselves with dramatic art or practical artistic/aesthetic activities only to a small extent, and the numbers would be much lower if only the relevant answers were considered.

Furthermore, the respondents expressed whether they had also completed any courses, workshops or seminars focused on theoretical, methodological or practical topics on how to carry out activities with children in kindergartens, with a focus on dramatic expression or the use of creative drama. It was a closed question.

Table 17: Courses, workshops or seminars focused on theoretical, methodological or practical topics, and how to carry out activities with children in kindergartens, with a focus on dramatic expression or the use of creative drama

| frequency | | | relative frequency % | | |
|-----------|-----|-------|----------------------|-----|-------|
| yes | no | total | yes | no | total |
| 43 | 128 | 171 | 11.7% | 35% | 46.7% |

Under the aggregate variable for the opportunities of kindergarten teachers to acquire knowledge of dramatic art and creative drama in their undergraduate training or in other forms of education (Table 4), it can be stated that it is in the lower half of the scoring scale (scale 0 to 12).

Table 18: Description of the opportunities of teachers to acquire knowledge of dramatic art and creative drama

| n | M | Md | SD | min | max |
|-----|------|----|------|-----|-----|
| 366 | 3.55 | n | 2.10 | 0 | 10 |

3.5 The relationship of kindergarten teachers towards dramatic art

In the course of their studies, within pedagogical praxis and in everyday life, the kindergarten teacher encounters art and develops a relationship towards it. The respondents assessed the importance of dramatic art in their lives (Table 19). It was a closed multiple choice item.

Table 19: The kindergarten teachers' relationship towards dramatic art

| | very significant | significant | partly significant | mostly insignificant | not significant at all |
|--|------------------|-------------|--------------------|----------------------|------------------------|
| n | 97 | 171 | 49 | 17 | - |
| % | 26.5% | 46.7% | 13.4% | 4.6% | - |
| - a total of 334 teachers (91.3%) answered, 32 (8.7%) did not answer | | | | | |

Almost half of the teachers (46.7%) consider dramatic art to be important in their lives and more than a quarter of the teachers (26.5%) consider it to be very important. It is alarming that 6.8% of the respondents consider their knowledge in the field of dramatic art to be insufficient, while working as a kindergarten teacher.

In the next question, the respondents commented on how often they attend the following institutions or performances (Table 20). It was a closed multiple choice item.

Table 20: The respondents' comments on the frequency of visits to institutions and events

| theatrical performances | at least once a week | at least once per month | at least once every half a year | at least once per year | never |
|--|----------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------------|------------------------|-------|
| n | 5 | 60 | 165 | 94 | 12 |
| % | 1.4% | 16.4% | 45.1% | 25.7% | 3.3% |
| - a total of 336 teachers (91.8%) answered, 30 (8.2%) did not answer | | | | | |

| ballet / musical | at least once a week | at least once per month | at least once every half a year | at least once per year | never |
|---|----------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------------|------------------------|-------|
| n | - | 9 | 50 | 126 | 121 |
| % | - | 2.5% | 13.7% | 34.4% | 33.1% |
| - a total of 306 teachers (83.6%) answered, 60 (16.4%) did not answer | | | | | |
| opera / operetta | at least once a week | at least once per month | at least once every half a year | at least once per year | never |
| n | - | 2 | 12 | 17 | 25 |
| % | - | 0.5% | 3.3% | 4.6% | 6.8% |
| - a total of 56 teachers (15.3%) answered, 310 (84.7%) did not answer | | | | | |

Almost half of the kindergarten teachers, according to their self-reflection, attend theatrical performances at least once every half a year. One third of teachers (34.4%) attend musicals at least once per year and one third of teachers (33.1%) stated that they do not attend them. Opera or operetta is less frequently visited by kindergarten teachers and only 8.4% of teachers state that they attend them at least once a year or more often.

The respondents indicated which statements related to the ownership of art-related objects best describe them (Table 21). It was a closed multiple choice item.

Table 21: The respondents' ownership of art-related objects

| Statements about the ownership of art-related objects | n | % |
|---|-----|-------|
| I have artistic paintings/sculptures or their reproductions in my home. | 135 | 36.9% |
| I own musical instruments. | 242 | 66.1% |
| I have art literature in my library. | 206 | 56.3% |
| I own video recordings of theatrical performances. | 53 | 14.5% |
| I own other art objects. | 42 | 11.5% |

In conclusion, the respondents were asked whether they are actively engaged in artistic creation. (Table 22) It was a closed multiple choice item.

Table 22: Active artistic/aesthetic creation by the teachers

| Answers to the question: "Do you act in plays?" | yes, often | yes, occasionally | never |
|---|------------|-------------------|-------|
| n | 22 | 109 | 156 |
| % | 6% | 29.8% | 42.6% |
| - a total of 287 teachers answered (78.4%) | | | |

Almost a third of teachers (29.8%) said that they sometimes act in plays and almost half of the teachers (42.6%) said that they never act in plays. Several respondents added that it is mainly within their kindergarten work. In this case, we cannot talk about the so-called high art, but rather about dramatic expression, or the aesthetic activity of the respondents.

Under the aggregate variable, the relationship of kindergarten teachers towards dramatic art (Table 5, Table 23) can be placed in the lower half of the scoring scale (scale from 0 to 19).

Table 23: Description of the relationship of kindergarten teachers towards dramatic art

| n | M | Md | SD | min | max |
|-----|------|------|------|-----|-----|
| 366 | 5.82 | 6.00 | 2.64 | 0 | 13 |

3.6 Verification of hypothesis H₁

A simple regression analysis was used to calculate the prediction of the relationship towards dramatic art with the opportunities of kindergarten teachers to acquire knowledge of dramatic art and creative drama. A statistically significant effect was found ($F(1, 364) = 73.3, p < .001$) with $R^2 = 0.165$. The opportunities for acquiring knowledge of dramatic art and creative drama statistically significantly positively predict the relationship of kindergarten teachers towards dramatic art ($t = 8.56, p < .001$). Increasing the opportunities for acquiring knowledge will also increase the teachers' attitudes towards dramatic art by 0.516.

Table 24: Regression analysis for the opportunities for acquiring knowledge as a predictor of the relationship of kindergarten teachers towards dramatic art

| Predictor | B | SE | β | t | p |
|------------------------------------|-------|--------|---------|-------|-------|
| Intercept | 3.990 | 0.2484 | | 16.06 | <.001 |
| Opportunities to acquire knowledge | 0.516 | 0.0603 | 0.409 | 8.56 | <.001 |

Note: $F(1, 364) = 73.3, p < .001, R^2 = 0.165$

The hypothesis was confirmed. The opportunities for teachers to acquire knowledge of dramatic art by predicting their relationship towards dramatic art. In other words, how teachers relate to dramatic art depends (also) upon their opportunities to acquire knowledge from dramatic art.

3.7 Verification of hypothesis H₂

In order to predict the use of dramatic art through creative drama methods in pre-primary education through the level of the relationship of kindergarten teachers towards dramatic art, a simple regression analysis was used and a statistically significant effect was found ($F(1, 364) = 42.5, p < .001$) with $R^2 = 0.105$.

The relationship of kindergarten teachers towards dramatic art is statistically significantly positively predicted by the use of dramatic art through creative drama methods in pre-primary education ($t = 6.52, p < .001$). If the relationship towards dramatic art increases, the use of dramatic art will also increase by 0.214.

Table 25: Regression analysis for the relationship of kindergarten teachers towards dramatic art as a predictor of the use of dramatic art in pre-primary education

| Predictor | B | SE | β | t | p |
|------------------------------------|-------|--------|---------|-------|-------|
| Intercept | 3.353 | 0.2102 | | 15.95 | <.001 |
| Opportunities to acquire knowledge | 0.214 | 0.0329 | 0.323 | 6.52 | <.001 |

Note: $F(1, 364) = 42.5, p < .001, R^2 = 0.105$

4 Discussion

Half of the kindergarten teachers consider dramatic art to be significant in their lives and almost a third of teachers consider it to be very significant. They also use it in preschool educational activities, which was commented on by 60.9% of teachers, at a frequency of once a week up to once per month.

In response to the questionnaire items, 36.6% of teachers stated a lack of professional and methodological literature with a focus on dramatic art and dramatic expression. In the research of B. Švábová (2013) and D. Kollárová (2016), the teachers also drew attention to the fact that Slovakia lacks professional literature and material in the field of creative drama. At present, the situation is already changing, and many quality publications are coming onto the market, which also reflect the issue of dramatic expression in education and creative drama. Our research has also shown that teachers are interested in such publications. Similarly, research by D. Kollárová (2016) showed that kindergarten teachers were interested in supplementing the methodological and professional literature within the field of aesthetic games for children.

When evaluating the item – children’s interest in working with a work of dramatic art - it is necessary to emphasise that it is the views of the respondents and their view of the children’s interest in working with a work of art, and not the current situation found among children. Thus, it can be assumed to a large extent that the respondents’ subjective evaluation of the children’s interest in dramatic art and works of art is influenced by the respondents’ own interest and relationship towards dramatic art as well as their competencies within the field of the application of art stimuli within education.

The kindergarten teachers involved in the research had opportunities to acquire knowledge of dramatic art and creative drama during secondary school, in so much as 41% of them have completed secondary pedagogical school, which has subjects focused on dramatic art, and the methodology of aesthetic activities based on the stimuli of dramatic art, within its study program. The majority of the respondents (62.4%) stated that they had a university degree. Among the respondents who have completed a university degree in pre-school and elementary pedagogy (which is also a qualification prerequisite for a kindergarten teacher), it can be assumed that they met with several disciplines focused on dramatic art and creative drama. The question is whether the aforementioned study focused on the knowledge of art, or more about its didactic processing and its potential for the children’s education.

Almost a third of teachers rated the opportunities of acquiring knowledge about dramatic art as good, and almost half of the teachers considered them to be very good to excellent. This self-reflection shows that several respondents were aware of their low competencies in this field. On the other hand, given the secondary and university study programs of pre-primary pedagogy, it would be ideal for graduates to end up with an excellent knowledge of dramatic art and creative drama and be aware of it within their own self-reflection. According to J. Craw (2015), students of preschool education pedagogy, who complete three-years of university studies, have only a few opportunities to develop a deeper and broader knowledge and understanding of the broader contexts from a variety of disciplines, including the arts, as well as within curricular documents, and also have no opportunities to make meaningful links to social and cultural praxis within the arts.

The low percentage of positive answers in the items about completed courses, workshops or seminars focused on dramatic art/expression may be caused by the respondents’ lack of interest in further education within the area of dramatic art, perhaps also because these respondents (who did not comment on the completion of the aforementioned courses, seminars or workshops) were satisfied with the acquired education in the fields of theory, methodology or practical topics, based on art stimuli during secondary school or university studies.

The limitations of the research are that the completion of the questionnaire was voluntary and was probably completed mainly by teachers who have a relationship towards (dramatic) art and felt the need to comment on this topic. Thus, the real situation may be “worse” than described, especially in terms of the current state of the use of dramatic art/expression within kindergartens and the relationship of the respondents towards dramatic art.

5 Conclusions and Implications

According to preschool education experts, working with drama should become part of the work of every teacher. The method beneficial for both children and teachers is creative drama, in which the child becomes a carrier of various situations through personal involvement, is encouraged to be independent in finding solutions, and develops communication skills. Through creative activities and personal experiences, it supports personal and social development. In addition, it is interdisciplinary, teaching through play and experience.

The research clearly confirmed that the opportunities for acquiring knowledge from dramatic art and creative drama

statistically significantly positively predict the relationship of kindergarten teachers towards dramatic art. It was also confirmed that the relationship of kindergarten teachers towards dramatic art statistically significantly positively predicts the use of works of dramatic art by creative drama methods in preschool education.

The benefits and recommendations for pedagogical praxis are derived from the research results: The first is to raise the awareness of kindergarten teachers about the opportunities for using the stimuli of dramatic art through creative drama methods. Already within the study of future kindergarten teachers, more attention should be paid to the didactic use of dramatic art and more specific incentives should be applied, in preparation for the profession on how to didactically work with dramatic art. Kindergarten teachers should be offered methodological guidelines and practical ideas on how to carry out activities with children in kindergartens using creative drama. Based on the research results, it can also be recommended to implement elements of creative drama into the kindergarten school curricula.

The impetus for further research is to carry out case studies of specific kindergarten teachers who successfully implement elements of creative drama into their educational praxis, and from them the resulting creation of methodological materials with the subsequent application research of their implementation into broader educational practice.

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