Ideal Drama Classroom Design From the Perspective of Preservice Teachers

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Abstract

The objective of this research is to determine the opinions of preservice teachers about the ideal drama classroom. For this purpose, a descriptive study was conducted within the scope of qualitative research. The study included 71 preservice teachers from different branches taking drama courses in the spring semester of the 2019-2020 academic year in the education faculty of a public university in Turkey. The researcher developed a data collection tool to determine preservice teachers' opinions about the ideal drama classrooms. In this context, preservice teachers designed their ideal drama classrooms, noted the objects that should be present, and wrote their opinions about the drama classroom they designed. The obtained data were analyzed by using content analysis. Frequency, code, and theme tables were created, and direct quotations were used to reflect participant opinions. Preservice teachers stated that an ideal drama classroom should be suitable for movement and spacious, and the floor should be appropriate for walking barefoot. In addition, they noted that in an ideal drama classroom, equipment such as stationery, costumes, cushions, sound system, board, and computer should be available. Suggestions were presented based on the opinions of preservice teachers.

Keywords: Preservice Teacher, Drama, Drama Classroom, Ideal Drama Classroom

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INTRODUCTION

Besides being an art form, drama is an alternative and effective method of teaching. In this context, starting from preschool, it can be used at almost every level of education, such as primary school, secondary school, high school, and university, and for different occupational groups and participant groups. When the concept definition is examined, creative drama in its most general form is defined as the enactment of a purpose or an idea based on the life experiences of the group members, using techniques such as improvisation and role-playing (Adıgüzel, 2013). Considering that drama practices are carried out in a group, under the direction of a leader, within the context of a subject and a space, each component is essential. According to Adıgüzel (2013), space is as important as the leader and the group throughout the process. Therefore, an interaction between the leader, the participant, and the space is crucial for the efficiency of creative drama studies.

For the drama to take place, it first needs a group, a leader with sufficient experience in the field and the method of drama, an open or closed space that the group can comfortably use, and a notion with a dramatic structure that the group can act (Adıgüzel, 2013). It can be said that the criteria related to the space used in drama processes are not absolute, but there are precise requirements for the process to be applied more effectively. Drama practices can be carried out anywhere, open or closed. Different spaces can also be used according to their purpose, such as museums, historical sites, school gardens, and streets (Oğuz Namdar, 2021).

Most schools lack drama classrooms, and teachers mostly complain about the absence of suitable drama classrooms and adequate equipment. Although drama courses are offered in education faculties as compulsory or elective, not all faculties may have drama classrooms. Additionally, faculties with drama classrooms occasionally could experience material issues. When studies in the related literature are examined, it is seen that several conclusions, deductions, and suggestions are presented. For example, Koç and Geçit (2020) suggested that spaces suitable for the class size can be preferred to reduce the noise in the classroom during the execution of creative drama activities. Physical inadequacy of the classrooms, lack of a suitable environment for drama, fixed desks, concrete floors, and lack of equipment are among the problems encountered in the literature within the scope of space while using the drama method (Adıgüzel, 2001; Altıntaş, 2012; Aykaç and Köğce, 2014; Gülakan, 2019; Nalçacı, 2012).

Within the scope of the materials necessary in the drama space, Gülakan (2019) stated that the tools, equipment, and materials that can be used during drama activities should be chosen according to the interests and needs of the children and kept in schools and that the administrators in educational institutions should provide the necessary support for the tool, equipment, and material supply.

Within the scope of the problems encountered during drama practices, it has been noted in the literature that there are several issues and deficiencies related to space. On this basis, it is aimed in this study to include opinions and suggestions on the creation of new drama classrooms to be designed and assembled, the rearrangement of the currently used drama classrooms, and how the existing classrooms can be used more effectively within the scope of drama practices. Preservice teachers need to use drama classrooms effectively to employ drama as an effective method in their future classrooms. In this respect, as well as constructing a lesson plan based on the drama method, they also need to be aware of the concept of space, which is one of the components of drama. A drama leader or a teacher who will use drama as a method in their lessons should know what features the drama classroom they will prepare should have. Drama practices can be carried out in almost any environment; however, the suitability of drama spaces in many aspects, such as functionality, safety, and material supply, can increase the efficiency of the class. Therefore, it is thought that the opinions of the preservice teachers who have taken the drama course are essential for creating an ideal drama classroom so that the lessons to be taught with the drama method can be more effective and productive.

METHOD

Research Model

In this research, a descriptive study was conducted within the scope of qualitative research to determine preservice teachers' opinions about an ideal drama classroom. 'Descriptive studies define a given situation as precisely and carefully as possible. In educational research, the most prevalent descriptive method is survey research as researchers summarize characteristics (skills, preferences, behaviors, etc.) of individuals, groups, or (sometimes) physical environments (such as school)' (Büyüköztürk et al., 2021, p. 25).

Study Sample

This study was conducted with 71 preservice teachers (50 women, 21 men) from different branches who were taking 'Drama in Education' and 'Drama' courses in the education faculty of a state university located in the northern region of Turkey, in the spring term of the 2019-2020 academic year. Figure 1 shows the distribution of preservice teachers participating in the research by gender. Of the 26 preservice teachers who took the 'Drama in Education' course, 23 were women, and 3 were men. Of the 45 preservice teachers who took the 'Drama' course, 27 were women, and 18 were men.
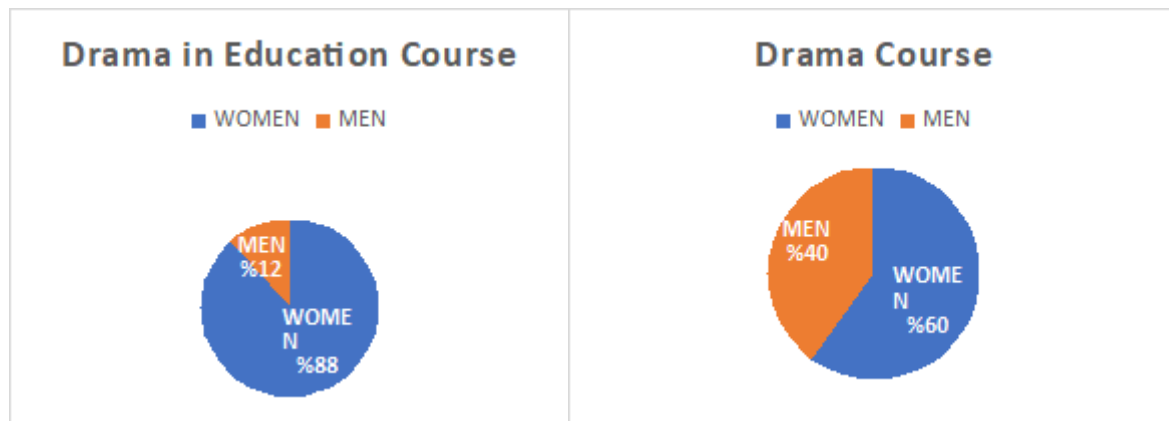
Graph 1. Gender Distribution

Data Collection Tools

The researcher developed the data collection tool. Preservice teachers were asked to design an ideal drama classroom regarding the concept of space, which is one of the components of drama. They were asked to draw the designs on A4 paper and write down the objects they added on the second page. Lastly, they were asked to write their opinions about the ideal drama classroom they designed. Voluntary participation of preservice teachers was ensured. Within the scope of the application, necessary ethics committee and institutional permissions were obtained. The current research were evaluated by the Recep Tayyip Erdoğan University Social and Human Sciences Ethics Committee at the meeting numbered 2020/60 and were found ethically appropriate.

Data Analysis

Within the scope of this study, the data consist of preservice teachers' drawings and written opinions about the ideal drama classroom. The data obtained from the study are visual and written documents collected from the preservice teachers. The data of the study were analyzed using content analysis. The names of each preservice teacher are indicated as K1, K2, K3, etc. The names of the participants were not directly used. Firstly, all the drawings and written responses of the preservice teachers were thoroughly examined. Then, the drawings and answers of 10 students were analyzed

separately by a faculty member who teaches the qualitative research methods course in graduate programs. Codes generated after the analysis were discussed, and the codes that were not mutually agreed upon were evaluated collectively until a consensus was established. Each object drawn in the drama classroom designed by the preservice teachers was turned into a written document as a code. The answers given by the preservice teachers were divided into codes and themes to create frequency (f) tables. The frequencies in the tables are listed in descending order from the most frequently repeated code to the least repeated code. Their opinions are also presented through direct quotations in the continuation of the findings, along with the participant number. Following the data analysis and table development, the applicability of the categories and themes was evaluated by taking an expert opinion on the tables.

FINDINGS

Materials necessary in the drama classroom, according to preservice teachers

The preservice teachers' responses were analyzed by content analysis, and the materials that should be in the drama classroom were organized into four categories: physical environment, activity materials, enactment, and technology.

Table 1. Physical Environment

Theme	Category	f	Codes
Physical Environment	Organizers	104	Closet (n=44), Shoe Rack (n=16), Costume closet (n=12), Stationery cabinet (n=10), Shelves (n=8), Basket (n=3), Toy basket (n=3), Boxes (n=3), Crate (n=2), Chair cabinet (n=1), Student locker (n=1), Puppet box (n=1)
	Seating	100	Cushions (n=63), Chair (n=21), Stool (n=6), Armchair (n=5), Bean bag (n=3), Teacher's Chair (n=2)
	Stage Layout	59	Stage (n=45), Stage curtain (n=9), Stage decor (n=2), In-stage balcony (n=1), Puppet stage (n=1), Hologram stage (n=1)
	Table	51	Table (n=21), Teacher's table (n=9), Study tables (n=5), Student tables and chairs (n=4), Multi-purpose table (n=4), Makeup table (n=2), Coffee table (n=2), Desk (n=2), Craft table (n=1), Computer table (n=1)
	Hygiene	49	Air Conditioner (n=12), Trash can (n=10), Ventilation (n=7), Disinfectant (n=3), Sink (n=3), Overshoes (n=2), Water dispenser (n=2), Air purification system (n=2), Social distance bars (n=1), Air freshener (n=1), Bathroom (n=1), Mask (n=1), Vacuum cleaner (n=1), Paper towel machine (n=1), Mat (n=1), Waste bins (n=1)
	Floor	42	Carpet (n=30), Free space (n=5), Wooden floor (n=5), Circles on the floor (n=1), Tatamis (n=1)
	Spatial Arrangements	40	Coat hanger (n=12), Curtain (n=7), Mirror (n=6), Window (n=4), Door (n=4), Insulation (n=3), Blank walls (n=2), Sound Insulation (n=2)
	Lighting	26	Lighting (n=13), Lamp (n=4), Ceiling lamp (n=3), Spotlights (n=2), Light switches (n=1)
	Nature	11	Garden (n=3), Tree (n=2), Aquarium (n=2), Pet (n=1), Plants (n=1), Potted flowers (n=1), Birdhouses (n=1)
	Art	10	Paintings (n=5), Footed easel (n=2), Pictures (n=1), Artworks (n=1), Wall painting (n=1)

Corners	7	Music corner (n=1), Multi-purpose corner (n=1), Meeting corner (n=1), Atatürk corner (n=1), Painting area (n=1), Music area (n=1), Playground (n=1)	
Walls	4	Colored walls (n=2), White wallpaper (n=1), Soft wall coverings (n=1)	
National Values	4	Independence March and our flag (2), portrait of Atatürk and Atatürk's Address to Turkish Youth (n=2)	

When Table 1 is examined, it is seen that the preservice teachers predominantly expressed their opinions about the physical environment among the materials to be found in the ideal drama classroom. The most used categories regarding the ideal drama classroom were organizers, seating, stage layout, table, hygiene, floor, spatial arrangements, and lighting. The views on national values were expressed in the least number. According to the TDK (Turkish Language Association) (2022), the concept of 'national value' is defined as the social and cultural elements a nation regards as unique and proud to have. The most frequently repeated codes under the category of 'organizers' were closet, shoe rack, costume closet, stationery cabinet, shelves, basket, toy basket, boxes, and crate, frequently found in drama classrooms.

Table 2. Activity Materials

Theme	Category	f	Codes
Activity Materials	Use of Board	54	Interactive board (n=25), Board (n=22), Whiteboard (n=7)
	Book	32	Bookshelf (n=16), Books (n=5), Textbooks (n=1)
	Stationery	16	Stationery (n=10), Pencil case (n=2), String (n=1), Scissors (n=1), Tape (n=1), Chalk (n=1)
	Game Tools	15	Ball (n=5), Toys (n=4), Trampoline (n=2), Hula hoop (n=2), Balloon (n=1), Rope (n=1)
	Written/Printed Materials	6	Posters (n=3), Newspaper Clippings (n=1), Newspaper (n=1), Magazine (n=1)

In Table 2, it is seen that the preservice teachers mostly expressed their opinions regarding the use of board under the theme of activity materials. In addition, other categories are seen as books, stationery, game tools, and written/printed materials. Posters, newspaper clippings, newspaper, and magazine codes were used within the scope of written/printed materials, which is the category with the least number of comments.

Table 3. Enactment

Theme	Category	f	Codes
Enactment	Costume	22	Mask (n=5), Hat (n=3), Old clothes (n=3), Cane (n=2), Household items (n=1), Finger puppets (n=1), Glasses (n=1), Face paints (n=1), Shoes (n=1), Fabric pieces (n=1), Telephone handset (n=1), Wig (n=1), Umbrella (n=1)
	Preparation for the Enactment Process	20	Costumes (n=11), Costume room (n=4), Puppets (n=2), Six-color hat (n=1), Makeup mirror (n=1), Costume hanger (n=1)
	Exhibition	20	Bulletin board (n=18), Exhibition board (n=1), Event board (n=1)

In Table 3, three categories were created under the theme of enactment: costume, preparation for the enactment process, and exhibition. The most frequently used category was the costume. In the costume category, the most common items were masks, hats, old clothes, and canes.

Table 4. Technology

Theme	Category	f	Codes
Technology	Audio Amenities	57	Sound System (n=21), Speaker (n=20), Musical Instruments (n=12), Sound Insulation (n=3), Saz (n=1)
	Technological Device	36	Computer (n=16), Projector (n=6), Microphone (n=2), Camera (n=2), Green Screen (n=2), Projection Curtain (n=2), Cassette/CD Player (n=1), Printer (n=1), Camera (n=1), Overhead Projector (n=1), Audio Receivers (n=1), TV Screen (n=1)

In Table 4, audio amenities are the most commonly used under the technology theme, followed by technological devices. Sound systems, speakers, and musical instruments are among the most frequently repeated codes within the scope of audio amenities. Among technological devices, computers and projectors are the most repeated codes.

Sample drawings from ideal drama classrooms designed by preservice teachers

Samples of ideal drama classroom designs drawn by preservice teachers are as follows:

The ideal drama classroom drawn by T5
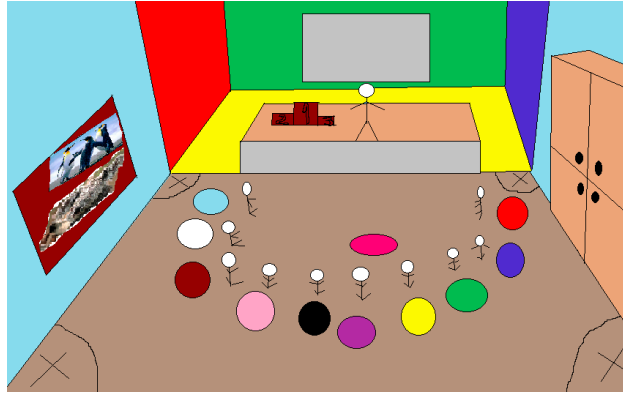

The ideal drama classroom drawn by T7

The ideal drama classroom drawn by T10

The ideal drama classroom drawn by T12

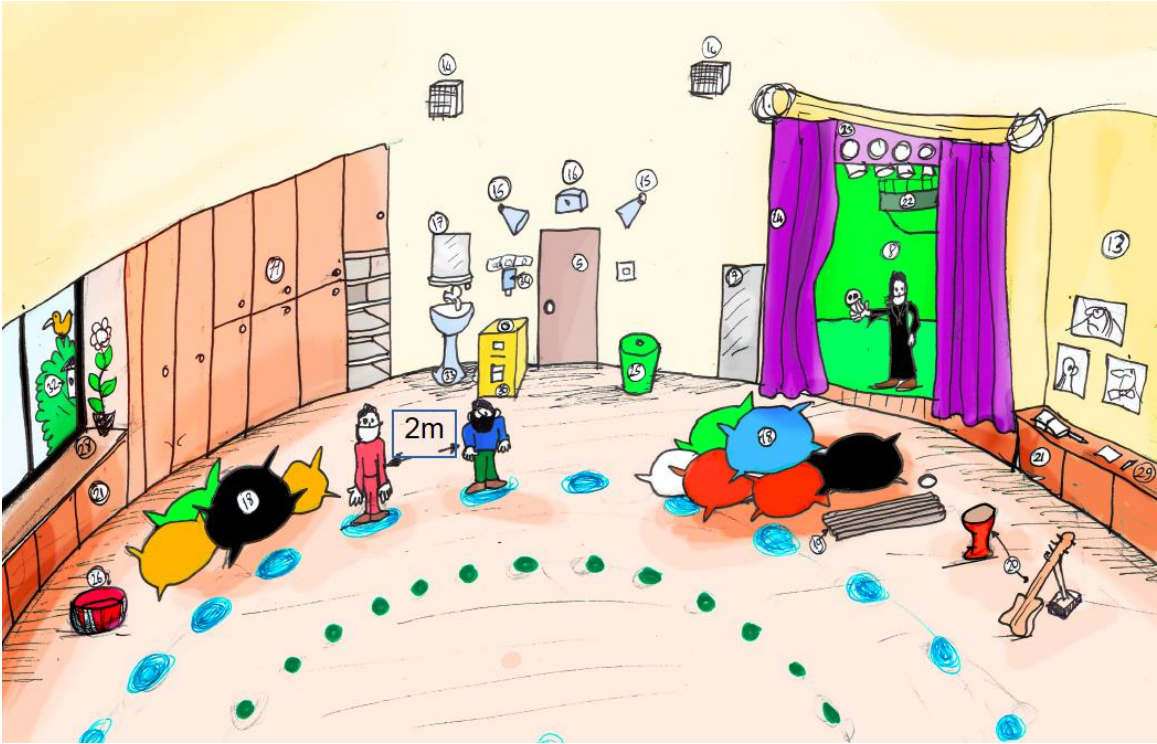**The ideal drama classroom drawn by T13**

The ideal drama classroom drawn by T16

The ideal drama classroom drawn by T24

The ideal drama classroom drawn by T27

The ideal drama classroom drawn by T31: 'The east-facing half of the drama classroom'

The ideal drama classroom drawn by T31: 'The west-facing half of the drama classroom'

The ideal drama classroom drawn by T34

The ideal drama classroom drawn by T49

The ideal drama classroom drawn by T69

When we look at the ideal drama classrooms drawn by the preservice teachers, it can be observed that they generally design spaces where the students can move freely and which can provide opportunities for physical mobility. Furthermore, the seating arrangement in the ideal drama classrooms drawn by the preservice teachers is also noteworthy. Predominantly, the seating arrangement is depicted quite differently from a classical classroom arrangement, and the circle arrangement is commonly preferred. While some participants chose to use a stage in their drama classrooms, some of them did not draw stages in their classrooms. Regarding the use of walls, some preferred to color and add interest to the classroom walls, while others left the walls blank. For

example, while T24 described the walls of the drama classroom as colorful and decorated, T27 depicted a classroom with more plain walls. As observed, they generally prefer to use cushions in their drawings within the scope of seating, so it can be said that most of them designed a drama classroom that they want to enter after removing their shoes. For example, while T49 preferred cushions in their drawing, T10 used both chairs and cushions. T31, unlike the others, took precautions within the scope of Covid-19 in the drama classroom and included plants, birds, and musical instruments in the sample drawing. In the drawings, the teacher and the student are generally depicted on the same platform; students and the teacher are portrayed sitting on the same material as cushions and chairs. For example, T49 pictured the teacher and the students sitting on cushions in a circle in their drawing, whereas unlike the general, T69 used cushions for the students and a chair for the teacher.

Direct quotations from the opinions of preservice teachers on the ideal drama classrooms they designed

Preservice teachers were asked to make their general evaluations in writing about the ideal drama classrooms they designed. Some of the opinions of the preservice teachers are presented below.

K1: 'The posters and pictures hung on the right wall of the classroom are designed because exhibiting the works of the students in the classroom provides a great reinforcement for the student's learning.'

K3: 'I included trees and quotes about art on the walls in the classroom; I thought it was intended to remind people of the importance of their work and make them feel good. Apart from these, I tried to avoid complexity by paying attention to the simplicity of my drama classroom, and I tried to give importance to its clarity and functionality.'

K11: 'There are shelves and bulletin boards in the classroom, allowing students to display the products they have prepared and to examine the products made by their classmates. With the stage and costume room, it was ensured that students associated the lesson with real-life.'

K13: 'The drama classroom is large with plenty of amenities, its interior design can be changed if desired, and it is also equipped with tools that will not harm students during activities. Thanks to the objects around, the student can be motivated, participate in the lesson, and get into the role more effortlessly.'

K19: 'The walls are decorated with pictures and paintings to keep the participants entertained and to make the classroom more engaging. Security precautions were included when creating the drama classroom. There are no materials that could endanger the participants.'

When the preservice teachers' opinions on the ideal drama classroom they designed are evaluated, it is clear that each emphasizes distinct aspects. For example, while K1 drew attention to the importance of pictures and posters hung on the walls during learning, K3 also stated that quotes about art in the classroom would make students feel better. Likewise, while K11 pointed out the importance of having shelves and boards to display the products prepared by the students in the classroom, P13 stated that they took care to use tools that would not harm the students during the activities, and K19 noted that they used paintings and pictures on the walls to make the classroom more engaging.

K26: 'I noticed that it was completely safe for health while designing my classroom. I took care to choose soft, health-safe, and durable materials.'

K28: 'I kept the work area wide with folding tables. I have set up an environment suitable for putting on a play. I tried to make the activities fun by placing a stage.'

K30: *'I think that an ideal drama classroom should be simple. Because I took drama lessons and have been in the drama class a lot in the lessons I have taken before, the more complex the elements in the drama classroom, the messier the student's impression gets, and it negatively affects the student's perspective on the classroom. Therefore, drama classrooms should be simple and in a particular order, and their materials should be efficient. I put materials about music, painting, and drama in my classroom.'*

K40: *'When creating the drama classroom, I started by asking myself what kind of environment I would like to see this class in if it were me. I designed this drama classroom by thinking about how to learn the lesson and make it useful. For me, drama class means a class that I can be comfortable in, that I am not being put into a box, and that allows me to be myself. I created my design while keeping these criteria in mind.'*

K44: *'The primary purpose of the classroom I have designed is that the place resembles a home, and by home, I mean the intimacy of the atmosphere and the feeling of comfort.'*

K45: *'I designed the drama space so students can work comfortably, practice without shoes, be safe, the temperature and lighting conditions are suitable, and students can move freely. The availability of all kinds of tools and equipment in the classroom environment enables students to activate their imagination for their work. Therefore, the existence of the tools and materials I have chosen in the drama space I have designed allows the students to feel that they belong to the environment they are in and to act independently.'*

K47: *'This drama classroom I designed is quite large with plenty of area for activities. The round placement of cushions is intended to encourage students' eye contact and communication while also providing a productive lesson.'*

K26, one of the preservice teachers, stated that the materials they used in their ideal drama classroom were harmless to health, soft, and durable. K28 tried to create a larger space by using folding tables. K30, on the other hand, claimed that an ideal drama classroom should be simple and stated that they included materials about music, painting, and drama in their classroom. K40 suggested that the drama classroom should be a classroom that will allow the person to be themselves and make them feel comfortable. Similarly, K44 emphasized the importance of making the participant feel comfortable and providing the intimacy of a home environment in the drama classroom they described. Finally, K45 and K47 indicated that the ideal drama classrooms they designed were spacious and comfortable environments suitable for activities.

K58: *'The first item I incorporated when designing was the window on the right because I think there should be a window in a classroom where individuals spend time actively. Even though the carpet and armchair added a bit of a living room vibe, I'm sure they will be practical in the enactments. I can hardly imagine any place without a bookshelf because a book is like a devoted lover, and I believe it should be added.'*

K65: *'I paid attention to the drama space I designed being colorful and in harmony with the paintings and the drawings on the walls. Because I think it is essential that the drama classroom is where the drama participants and the drama leader feel good and happy when they enter.'*

K66: *'I wanted the participants to feel like they stepped into a different world when they entered the classroom. By removing their real identities and roles, I attempted to design a space that would offer them the sense and motivation to be anything they wanted.'*

K69: *'This classroom consists of a soft plastic floor where children can feel comfortable. The walls are also composed of the same materials to prevent injuries. A setting in which children are free to express themselves and experience the drama.'*

K58 stated that there should be a window and a bookshelf in the drama classroom they designed, and K65 gave importance to their classroom being colorful. K66 ensured that the drama classroom they designed would motivate students, while K69 stated that they created an environment where children could feel comfortable with the soft walls.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Within this study, the opinions of preservice teachers about the ideal drama classroom were determined. In this context, preservice teachers were asked to design an ideal drama classroom; they wrote the objects that should be in there and shared their opinions about the class they designed. Following the analysis of the data collected along these lines, the findings led to the following conclusions.

The drawings of the preservice teachers were analyzed, and the materials that should be in the classroom were grouped under a total of four themes: physical environment, activity materials, enactment, and technology. The physical environment comprises organizers, seating, stage layout, table, hygiene, floor, spatial arrangements, lighting, nature, art, corners, walls, and national values. It is observed that the most repeated category under the theme of the physical environment was organizers. Under the "organizers" category, the most frequently repeated codes were closets, shoe racks, costume cabinets, stationery cabinets, shelves, baskets, toy baskets, boxes, and crates. The theme of the activity materials is categorized into the use of boards, books, stationery, game tools, and written/printed materials. It was seen that the most repeated category under the theme of activity materials was the use of boards. The enactment theme is divided into three categories as costume, preparation for the enactment process, and exhibition. Under the costume category, masks, hats, old clothes, and canes were among the most frequently repeated codes. Finally, the technology theme is divided into two categories as audio amenities and technological devices. The most repeated category under the technology theme was audio amenities. Under the category of audio amenities, sound system, speaker, musical instruments, and sound insulation were among the most frequently repeated codes.

When we look at the designs of the preservice teachers, it is seen that the classrooms are generally wide enough for the students to move freely; and suitable for running, walking, playing games, and doing group work, allowing them to move freely. The ideal drama classrooms are considerably different from the classical classrooms, where desks and tables are lined up in a row. The preservice teachers designed classrooms with cushions, where chairs can be used flexibly by changing their places and where group work and many methods-techniques are possible. They usually illustrated classrooms where they entered without shoes and had shoe racks.

Considering the opinions of the preservice teachers about the ideal drama classrooms they designed, it was stated that they usually took care to develop their classrooms functionally, used stages, costumes, and safe materials during the activities in a way that would not harm the children, chose objects for the classroom that would motivate the students, took safety precautions, tried to create a wide area, put art-related materials, and designed an environment where they could feel comfortable.

Within the scope of the relevant literature, Gülakan (2019) stated that the lack of drama classrooms in schools is among the most significant challenges experienced in practice, among the difficulties encountered by preservice teachers in terms of space while using the creative drama method. Likewise, Oruç (2004) states that the absence of drama classrooms in schools presents difficulties in practice.

The place of drama in a class where drama is being utilized as a method is just as crucial as the lesson's overall structure. In this study, the opinions of preservice teachers were utilized to design an ideal drama classroom. Based on the findings obtained from this study, the following recommendations were developed:

- An ideal drama classroom should be designed in schools.

- Ideal drama classrooms should be designed in education faculties.

- Infrastructure projects should be prepared for the development of drama classrooms.

- Primary stationery items should be provided for use in drama classrooms.

- When preparing drama classrooms, it should be ensured that the classroom is big enough for practice and for the group to move freely.

- To be able to move comfortably in drama classrooms, it should be ensured that the floor is of a suitable material.

- To use the floor effectively in drama classrooms, shoes should be removed before entering the classroom.

- There should be at least as many cushions as the number of people in the drama class.

- Storage options like cabinets and crates should be employed to protect materials such as accessories and costumes that can be used in drama processes.

- Elements such as sun exposure, ventilation, and sanitation of the drama classroom should all be considered.

- The drama classroom should have music, a sound system, and a projector.

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No potential conflict of interest was declared by the author.

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The author is responsible for conceptualization, data curation, formal analysis, Project Administration, investigation, methodology, resources, Validation, Writing – Original Draft Preparation, Writing – Review & Editing

Ethical Statement:

This research was ethically approved by Recep Tayyip Erdoğan University Social and Human Sciences Ethics Committee at the meeting numbered 2020/60. The consent forms were collected from the participants.

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