

**Beyond Happily Ever After:
Challenging Gender Stereotypes with Process Drama in Eastern Turkey¹**

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Summary

When researchers were trying to decide on the research topic, they wanted it to aim to solve a social problem. For example, they thought how wonderful it would be if the gender stereotypes and sexist roles that often plague me in life were eliminated. The to-do list handed to especially women by society was quite long compared to life: 'What time should I go home? How should I dress when I go out? How many years should I graduate from school? When should I get married? How should I organise the henna and wedding? How many children should I have? Which profession should I choose in order to do both the work of my house and my own work?' Instead of struggling with such questions, researchers cared that everyone should live according to the mood they felt good in their own time. They decided to conduct research on gender equality because it must be supported making important decisions in one's life on one's own will, not under the pressure of society, elsewhere, or relatives. The material to be used in this study was fairy tales that we believe to be innocent because it can be said that gender stereotypes and sexist roles reach us through fairy tales during childhood. It is also possible that the princesses in fairy tales were bored of going directly to another house after leaving the house they lived in. It was time to rewrite sexist fairy tales.

In this study, the process drama was determined as a tool that liberates the person and takes him/her on a journey of self-discovery. If we use a metaphor, we liken process drama to a bicycle because process drama requires labour, attention and responsibility like cycling. While doing this study, we aimed to change the gender stereotypes in the fairy tales that have been passed down from ear to ear for generations by using the process drama approach and to end the social pressure applied to the person according to his/her gender. Process drama is one of the planning approaches in drama in education. Process drama can

¹ This paper is derived from first author's master thesis completed under the supervision of the second author.

be defined as a planning approach in which human experience involving conflict and crisis are explored, investigated and analysed in an improvisation-based manner based on a preliminary text created by the instructor or by the instructor and participants together. Process drama, unlike conventional theatre, does not proceed with a linear plot. It is open to creating a flexible fiction in which participants can critically reflect their thoughts. Organising workshops spread over a long period of time in the focus of a subject determined in the process drama approach can enable the participants to acquire the desired acquisition in a memorable way. In process drama, teacher in role, improvisation with the whole group, as well as writing activities and research processes are also employed.

The research process started with collecting the participants' opinions on gender equality via semi-structured interview form. The purpose of the researchers to do this is to learn the participants' perspectives on gender equality before the implementation of process drama workshops. In the second step, the process drama workshop was started. The first workshop aimed to discuss the importance of differences. In the third step, personality traits workshop was implemented. In this workshop, the trainer presented a fictional world to the participants. According to the fiction, the participants live in a kingdom and this country has been ruled by men for many years. For the first time, women will be able to stand as candidates in the elections to be held this year. In the fiction, the participants play the role of advertising employees who run the election campaign of the Princess who is running for the elections. The trainer planned to conduct an interconnected workshop process by designing the fiction of the process drama workshops in this way. Creating a character in the process and struggling together with what happened to that character gave the participants the feeling of striving for someone they knew closely. The issue of gender equality was addressed through the personality structure, physical characteristics, profession and experiences during the selection process of the character created with the participants. Personality workshop is a workshop prepared to create the character of the Princess. In this workshop, the participants sought answers to the question of what kind of personality structure the Princess who wants to win the election should have. In the following workshops, themes such as physical characteristics, linguistic patterns, division of labour in housework, occupations, games and toys, media, politics were discussed in terms of gender roles through the Princess character created with the participants.

The research turned into a twelve-week curriculum, and participatory action research, one of the qualitative research methods, was used in this process. Participatory action research is a design used in educational research aimed at social change and transformation. This design has a flexible feature that allows participants to participate in the research and curriculum development process. The researchers took into account the views of the participants in the process of developing a process drama-based gender roles curriculum. This study was conducted in a small settlement in the easternmost part of Turkey. As the study group, 5th grade students consisting of 27 secondary school students were preferred. Observation and interview data collection techniques were used throughout the research. It was concluded that while the participants' expressions before the workshop process included a sexist attitude, their sharing on gender changed in an egalitarian direction after the workshop process. After the application, changes occurred in the participants' sexist stereotypes and

gender role perceptions. While the participants defined the princess with her appearance such as beautiful, ornate, blonde long hair in their answers before the application, after the application, they defined her primarily through her personality such as kind-hearted, just, kind, respectful, generous. It is suggested that the gender equality process drama workshops prepared within the scope of the research should be included in the curriculum and the subject of gender equality should be taught as a unit in Life Sciences, Human Rights and Citizenship, and Social Studies courses in order for students to gain awareness at an early age. In the paper to be presented, the researchers will talk about the difficulties they have experienced in practice and curriculum development.

Zühal Armoni My educational journey has shaped by my interest in different disciplines and international experiences. I completed my undergraduate studies in Classroom Teaching and Psychological Counseling and Guidance at Ankara University between 2015 and 2020. During my university education, I participated in the Erasmus Program at the University of Maribor in Slovenia from 2017 to 2018, where I studied for six months. Additionally, in the 2018-2019 academic year, I joined the student exchange program at Eskişehir Anadolu University, gaining valuable experience in various educational environments. After completing my undergraduate degree, I pursued a Master's in Creative Drama in Education at Ankara University. For my Master's thesis, I conducted a study on "Gender Equality," examining young people's views on gender equality through the process drama. My thesis focuses on drama to explore social gender equality and gender roles among children. Since 2021, I have been working as a classroom teacher at a public school in Hakkari/Yüksekova.

İhsan Metinnam is an assistant professor at Ankara University Faculty of Fine Arts. In 2008, he graduated from Ege University, Department of Primary School Teaching. Since the first years of his educational journey, he has searched for ways to combine education and art, and he believed that he could do this best through drama in education. As a result, he completed the creative drama master's programme at Ankara University Institute of Educational Sciences in 2011, and completed his doctorate in fine arts education in the same unit in 2017. Social justice and drama, creating cultural contact zones through drama, critical drama research and practices are among his fields of interest and study. He has taken part in many national and international drama and theatre events as a workshop leader and has directed theatre performances of student communities, young people. He has taught drama, theatre history, creative writing at undergraduate and graduate level. He has worked as a board member in different drama organisations at national and international level. In 2020, at the invitation of BAG Spiel und Theater, he spent three months in Hannover for theatre and drama work with migrants. He is currently continuing his work in Ankara. He is married and has a cat named Pir.