

INVESTIGATING SELF-DETERMINATION ASPECTS IN STUDENTS WITH VISION DISABILITY THROUGH DRAMATIC PLAY

Paraskevas Thymakis, & Vassilios Argyropoulos
Special Education Department, University of Thessaly (Greece)

Abstract

Self-determination is a very crucial and sensitive developmental domain for students with vision disability. This study investigates the role of dramatic play workshops on self-determination of eight students with vision disability, aged 8-12, from their parents' perspective. Quantitative data revealed that dramatic play intervention had a small positive effect on students' self-determination level, whereas qualitative data showed that parents observed significant positive changes on their children self-determination skills expression.

Keywords: *Self-Determination, vision disability, dramatic play, AIR self-determination scale, intervention.*

1. Introduction

Vision Disability (VD) is defined as “*decrease in vision that, even when corrected, adversely affects a child's educational performance*” (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004, sec. 300.8.). The notion of Self-Determination (S-D) is defined as “*a combination of skills, knowledge, and beliefs that enable a person to engage in goal-directed, self-regulated, autonomous behavior*” (Field, Martin, Miller, Ward, & Wehmeyer, 1998, p. 10). In addition, S-D is considered as one of the nine areas of the Expanded Core Curriculum for students with vision disability (SwVD) (Hatlen, 2003). One of the most effective means to develop S-D, is the dramatic play. This is a type of play which is used very often in education and through these type children act out various roles challenging their imagination and creativity. Usually, dramatic play consists of four steps which incorporate a sequence of tasks and activities as well as instructional methods relevant to theatrical techniques in order achieve specific educational goals (Beauchamp, 1985; Koyretzis, 1991; Mellou, 1994).

In addition, SwVD usually face difficulties in making choices which can affect positively the level of their S-D. Simultaneously, SwVD are “*at risk of remaining dependent on others for life*”, if their S-D is underdeveloped (Wolffe & Rosenblum, 2014, p. 472). Furthermore, although S-D seems to be a crucial predictor of future employment (McDonnall, 2011) and quality of life (Chao, 2018) of SwVD, there are only few studies which investigate effective S-D practices (Cmar, 2019; Cmar & Markoski, 2019). All the above converge on the need to study more systematically the effect that dramatic play can have on S-D. The present study aims to fill in this gap by investigating the impact of dramatic play on students' S-D who have vision disability.

2. Methodology

2.1. Sample

The sample of the present study consisted of parents of SwVD. The obtained data referred to their children S-D level, when the latter were involved in dramatic play workshops. Eight SwVD, aged 8-12, were involved in this study. SwVD attended a special education school of a large Greek city (above 1.000.000 residents). Three of them were totally blind and five had low vision. In terms of their gender, four were boys and four were girls.

2.2. Instruments

The AIR Self-Determination Scale (Wolman, Campeau, Dubois, Mithaug, & Stolarski, 1994), was used to measure the S-D level of the SwVD through their parents' opinions. The Scale in question contains two (2) subscales: a. capacity for S-D behavior (what the child does) with six 5-point Likert question and b. opportunities for S-D behaviors which consists of two parts: a. opportunities for S-D behaviors at home with six 5-point Likert questions and b. opportunities for S-D behaviors at school with

six 5-point Likert questions. As a whole, the AIR S-D Scale for parents included 18 questions and the score could vary from 0 up to 90 and the overall score could be converted in percentages.

In addition, when the participating parents filled in the AIR S-D Scale, the researchers asked their opinion about the impact of dramatic play on their children’s S-D level. The questions were the following:

1. Do you believe that the dramatic play, in which your child participated in, empowered his/her level of S-D? If that was the case, could you kindly tell us how did you realize it?
2. What was the feedback that your child gave you regarding S-D and dramatic play?

The purpose of the last two questions was to obtain also qualitative data; for this reason, parental permission was granted in order to record the interviewing process.

2.3. Research procedures

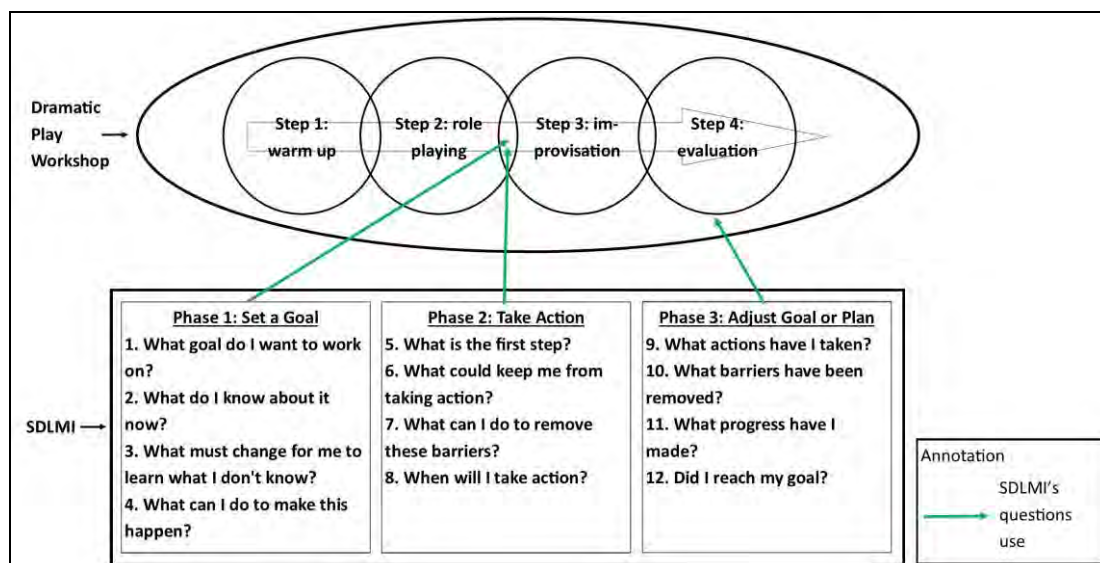
The present paper is considered as a quasi-experimental study which incorporates pre-test and post-test pre-experimental designs without control groups (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2018). A seven-month intervention programme through dramatic play was implemented and its’ purpose was the acquisition and development of S-D skills of eight SwVD. As mentioned above, the parents’ form of the AIR S-D Scale (Wolman et al., 1994) was used to measure the S-D level of their children before and after the intervention (i. e. the involvement in dramatic play, see Figure 1). The intervention took place in a Greek special education school for seven consecutive months. After that data analysis followed in conjunction with the interpretation of the results.

Figure 1. Research Design.



The intervention process consisted of 19 dramatic play workshops. Each workshop lasted for 45 minutes and took place once per week. The structure of the dramatic plays followed the Self-Determined Learning Model of Instruction (SDLMI) and each dramatic play consisted of four steps (i. e. warm-up, role-playing, improvisation, and evaluation) which was enriched with theatrical techniques aiming at an educational goal (Beauchamp, 1985; Koyretzis, 1991). SDLMI is a 12- question model, grouped in three successive phases (four core questions per phase): a. phase 1 – set a goal, b. phase 2 – take action, c. phase 3 – adjust goal or plan. All three phases of SDLMI aim to a. acquire and develop S-D skills, b. set goals and attainments, c. achieve positive (post-) school outcomes, and d. become more self-determined person (Shogren, Raley, Burke, & Wehmeyer, 2019). The phases of the SDLMI were present in all nineteen dramatic play workshops and took place mainly in the last three steps (see Figure 2).

Figure 2. The structure of dramatic play workshop.



2.4. Data Analysis

The method which framed the present study may be characterized as a mixed method because both quantitative and qualitative data were used. The quantitative data were analyzed through IBM SPSS Statistics 24 (descriptive and inferential statistical analysis) and qualitative data analysis was based on general inductive methodological frameworks (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014). In addition, the qualitative analysis, was conducted through Atlas.ti 8 for Windows. The two researchers followed a coding system by distinguishing groups of data and tracing thematic patterns from the participants' responses.

3. Results

3.1. Statistical results

Based on parents' responses to the AIR Self-Determination Scale, it was found that the children increased their S-D level after their involvement in the dramatic play workshops. The overall increase was 4.6%, the increase regarding the "capacity subscale" was 14.33%, whereas there was no change regarding the "opportunities subscale" (see Table 1).

Table 1. Descriptive statistical results of parents' form of AIR S-D Scale.

Subscales		Mean	Std. deviation	Min	Max
Capacity Subscale	Before	17.7 / 30	6.2	7	25
	After	22.0 / 30	3.5	18	27
Opportunities subscale	At home – before	24.5 / 30	3.6	21	29
	At home – after	23.8 / 30	4.0	18	29
	At school – before	21.8 / 30	3.8	17	28
	At school – after	22.3 / 30	4.8	16	28
	Opportunities Overall – before	46.3 / 60	5.7	39	54
	Opportunities Overall – after	46.2 / 60	6.9	38	55
Scale Overall	S-D level – before	64.0 / 90 (71.1%)	7.0	54	75
	S-D level – after	68.2 / 90 (75.7%)	8.9	56	81

In addition, inferential statistical analysis (see Table 2) was conducted through Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test (Morgan, 2017) and it was found that no significant statistical changes took place ($p = .168 > .005$) regarding the students' overall S-D level before and after the intervention (i.e. their involvement in the dramatic play workshops). Finally, internal consistency was ensured since the value of Cronbach's α (Fan & Randall, 2018) was sufficient (before the intervention was .717 and after .881).

Table 2. Descriptive statistical results of parents' form of AIR S-D Scale.

Subscales & Parts	Means		Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test	
	Before	After	Statistic	p
Capacity	17.7	22.0	1.782	0.075
Opportunities at School	21.8	22.3	0.272	0.785
Opportunities at Home	24.5	23.8	0.687	0.492
Opportunities Overall	46.3	46.2	0.211	0.833
Overall S-D level	64.0	68.2	1.378	0.168

3.2. Qualitative results

Qualitative data analysis revealed six categories which were related to specific S-D skills. Very often the parents' reports referred to more than one S-D skills. All parents observed that their children's S-D skills had been improved during the dramatic play workshops.

1. *Self-Knowledge and Self-Awareness*: All parents discussed about their children's *self-knowledge and self-awareness* enhancement in terms of their characteristics and personality traits such as vision disability awareness and the pace of schoolwork completion. One mother stated that her child said "I feel that I can manage better in class when I work at my own pace ...", and similarly another mother reported that:

“I think that dramatic play helped my child’s self-knowledge more than the sessions with a psychologist, because during dramatic play, children expressed their feelings in an easy-going way”

2. *Self-Advocacy and Assertiveness*: All parents highlighted the fact that when their children started to reflect on themselves, then they started to develop *self-advocacy and assertiveness* skills. Parents underlined that their children expressed their needs directly and in a more appropriate and refined way. They asked for help when they needed without having second thoughts because of their vision disability. According to a mother, her child said: *“I can’t do this because I am blind, could you please explain it to me...”*. Also, parents held the view that all SwVD who were involved in the dramatic play workshops, started to take more initiatives in their daily life, such as dressing, food, type of leisure, etc.

3. *Goal Setting and Attainment*: Five parents mentioned that their children started to set their own goals regarding their daily life. For example, *“study faster to save time to play more with my toys”*, *“learn to play many songs on bouzouki (Greek music instrument)”*. The same parents also observed that their children worked in more persistent way to attain their goals, something that was not happening before the dramatic play workshops.

4. *Planning*: Four parents said that their children seemed to have a better understanding regarding the steps needed to achieve a goal. For example: *“I must learn to play on bouzouki that part of this song, until the next lesson, ... mum please record my play to hear it”*. Another mother mentioned for her child: *“I think that her thoughts are more structured now in order to achieve her goals and wants”*.

5. *Self-Evaluation and Self-Monitoring*: Three parents reported that their children had developed *self-evaluation and self-monitoring* skills in every day activities. Their children started to inform them about their progress and evaluate their performances at school or outdoor activities.

6. *Problem Solving*: Two parents realized that their children’s *problem solving* skills have been improved. According to their report, their children started to discuss about potential solutions to problems that they were facing during that time.

4. Discussion

The analysis of the data revealed that the use of dramatic play through workshops may be considered as a range of good practices in order to empower the level of S-D of SwVD. There is only another one similar study which measured the influence of an intervention on S-D level of SwVD via AIR S-D Scale (Levin & Rotheram-Fuller, 2011) and the results were comparable. Because of the small sample, the results cannot be generalized, but the qualitative data showed that the development of S-D skills in SwVD can help them to succeed in school and in daily life challenges enhancing their psychological empowerment as well as their pathways thinking mainly in problem solving and goal attainment (Shogren et al., 2015). It can also be argued that S-D skills in blind students’ lives constitute the critical mass of goal-directed and autonomous behavior (Shogren et al., 2015). Finally, it is suggested that the aforementioned issues, should be an integral part of a systematic educational policy for the provision of educational opportunities in terms of equality and inclusion for all children including children with vision disability.

References

- Beauchamp, H. (1985). *Les Enfants Et Le Jeu Dramatique: Apprivoiser Le Theatre*. Bruxelles: A. De Boeck.
- Chao, P.-C. (2018). Using Self-Determination of Senior College Students with Disabilities to Predict Their Quality of Life One Year after Graduation. *European Journal of Educational Research*, 7(1), 1–8. doi: 10.12973/eu-jer.4.3.97
- Cmar, J. L. (2019). Effective Self-Determination Practices for Students with Disabilities: Implications for Students with Visual Impairments. *Visual Impairment & Blindness*, 113(2), 114–128. doi: 10.1177/0145482X19840454
- Cmar, J. L., & Markoski, K. (2019). Promoting Self-Determination for Students with Visual Impairments: A Review of the Literature. *Journal of Visual Impairment & Blindness*, 113(2), 100–113. doi: 10.1177/0145482X19839796
- Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2018). *Research Methods in Education* (8th ed.). London: Routledge.
- Fan, F., & Randall, J. (2018). Reliability. In B. B. Frey (Ed.), *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Educational Research, Measurement and Evaluation* (pp. 1397–1402). Los Angeles: SAGE.

- Field, S. L., Martin, J., Miller, R., Ward, M., & Wehmeyer, M. L. (1998). *A Practical Guide for Teaching Self-Determination*. Reston, VA: Council for Exceptional Children.
- Hatlen, P. (2003, December). Impact of Literacy on the Expanded Core Curriculum. Paper Presented at the Getting in Touch with Literacy Conference, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. Retrieved from <https://www.tsbvi.edu/fall-2015-spanish/118-general-1/1213-impact-of-literacy-on-the-expanded-core-curriculum>
- Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004. *20 U.S.C. § 1400*.
- Koyretzis, L. (1991). *To Θεατρικό Παιχνίδι* [The Dramatic Play]. Athens: Kastaniotis.
- Levin, D. S., & Rotheram-Fuller, E. (2011). Evaluating the efficacy of the empowered curriculum of self-determination for students with visual impairments. *Journal of Visual Impairment & Blindness*, *105*(6), 350–360. Retrieved from <http://ovidsp.ovid.com/ovidweb.cgi?T=JS&PAGE=reference&D=psyc8&NEWS=N&AN=2011-99090-270>
- Mcdonnall, M. C. (2011). Predictors of Employment for Youths with Visual Impairments: Findings from the Second National Longitudinal Transition Study. *Journal of Visual Impairment & Blindness*, *108*(8), 453–466. doi: 10.1177/0145482x1110500802
- Mellou, E. (1994). Tutored-Untutored Dramatic Play: Similarities and Differences. *Early Child Development and Care*, *100*(1), 119–130. doi: 10.1080/0300443941000109
- Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldana, J. (2014). *Qualitative Data Analysis: A Method Sourcebook* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications.
- Morgan, C. J. (2017). Use of proper statistical techniques for research studies with small samples. *American Journal of Physiology - Lung Cellular and Molecular Physiology*, *313*(5), L873–L877. doi: 10.1152/ajplung.00238.2017
- Shogren, K. A., Raley, S. K., Burke, K. M., & Wehmeyer, M. L. (2019). *The Self-Determined Learning Model of Instruction Teacher's Guide*. Lawrence, KS: Kansas University Center on Developmental Disabilities. Retrieved from <https://selfdetermination.ku.edu/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Teachers-Guide-2019-Updated-Logos.pdf>
- Shogren, K. A., Wehmeyer, M. L., Palmer, S. B., Forber-Pratt, A. J., Little, T. J., & Lopez, S. J. (2015). Causal agency theory: Reconceptualizing a functional model of self-determination. *Education and Training in Autism and Developmental Disabilities*, *50*(3), 251–263. doi: 10.2307/24827508
- Wolffe, K. E., & Rosenblum, L. P. (2014). Self-Determination. In C. B. Allman & S. Lewis (Eds.), *ECC Essentials: Teaching the Expanded Core curriculum to Students with Visual Impairments* (pp. 470–509). New York: AFB Press.
- Wolman, J. M., Campeau, P. L., Dubois, P. A., Mithaug, D. E., & Stolarski, V. S. (1994). *AIR Self-Determination Scale and User Guide*. Palo Alto, CA: American Institutes for Research. Retrieved from <http://www.ou.edu/zarrow/AIR User Guide.pdf>