

# **Dramatic Play as a Means of Developing Primary School Students' Self-concept**

Asterios Tsiaras

Assistant Professor, Department of Theatre Studies, University of Peloponnese, Greece.

Email: [tsiast@yahoo.gr](mailto:tsiast@yahoo.gr)

## **Abstract**

In this paper the role of dramatic play was examined as a means of developing primary school students' self-concept. A research study was conducted in 8 public primary school classrooms. The data collected were from 141 children aged 8 to 11 (66 boys, 75 girls) in an experimental process of pre and post testing, using Harter's scale of measuring self-concept. Statistical analyses of the research data revealed that: (1) dramatic play activities have positive effect on the reinforcement of the primary school students' self-concept and (2) the positive influence of dramatic play is not related to the age of students since the research expectations were finally confirmed in all research samples. Thus, more attention should be paid to a dramatic play-based curriculum in primary education if a child's self-concept development is to be facilitated.

**Keywords:** Research Study, Children, Primary School, Dramatic Play, Self-concept

## Theoretical Background

### Dramatic Play in Childhood

The term dramatic play may involve all types of pretend play, that is, symbolic play, role-play, imaginative play, fantasy play, make-believe play, and the socio-dramatic play (Mellou, 1995; Miller, 2010; Torgerson, 2001). What dramatic play borrows from theatre is the delimitation of space and time as well as the necessity for dramatic interaction among the participants (Faure & Lascar, 1994; Koster, 2011; Schechner, 1988). The form of dramatic play, which is the natural development of symbolic play, is influenced by the props and space provided, in favour of personal freedom to the players, so that they can create their own symbolic search modes (Machado, 2010; Saracho & Spodek, 1998; Wilson, 2008).

Dramatic play is a child-oriented activity and includes the following elements: imitation, simulation in relation to objects, role-play, interpersonal interaction and verbal communication (McCullough, 2000). Broadly speaking, this kind of play appears in the form of artistic behaviour between symbolic play and dramatic art (Koster, 2011; Smilansky, 1968). The activities that are included in dramatic play involve dramatic representation of social situations in an isolated or cooperative way, action with supportive objects or verbal interaction, as well as participants' knowledge for the illusory reality that is portrayed in play framework (Bolton, 1998; Charlesworth, 2011; Johnson, 1998).

Participating in dramatic play means social interaction, symbolic transformation and imagination, while the children represent roles in real and imaginary situations (Bretherton, 1989; Crouch, 2009; Jones, 2000). The children use their internal symbolic abilities, and through the transformative activity they give shape to their shared experience, maintaining social contact operation (Miller, 1999; Nwokah, 2010). Those engaged in dramatic play bear two types of schemata in their improvisations. On the one hand, they represent their symbolic feelings for cultural identities, roles, social events, language varieties, and ways of action (Bolton, 1998; Fein, 1987; Mayesky, 2009). On the other hand, they reveal what they have internalized in relation to dramatic play (Luongo-Orlando, 2010; Sawyer, 1995).

Many researchers consider dramatic play as a model of game-like activity, archetypal form of figurative thought and a means of inspiring symbolic, artistic and innovative behaviours in children (Haine, 1985; Rapp, 1984). Over the past decades there has been increasing interest by educators in understanding the positive effect of dramatic play in children's education. The majority of studies on dramatic play concern disabled children and pre-school age kids. Some surveys deal with the significance of the participants' personality in the form of acting out behaviors in dramatic play and some focus on the role of dramatic play in the development of children's cognitive, physical and symbolic skills (Fein, 1989; Lieberman, 1977; McCullough, 2000). Some other surveys focus on the influence of dramatic play on the participants' linguistic and narrative abilities and others investigate the developmental stages of symbolic play in relation to a child's age (McCune-Nicolish, 1981; Piaget, 1962). Moreover, other surveys evaluate the content of the dramatic activities and the influence these exert on the development of children's social skills (Yassa, 1997). Finally, some surveys look into the psychotherapeutic effect of dramatic play on children and the positive educational consequences by its adoption in primary school (Curry, 1974; Fineman, 1962).

Most of the above research evidence has come from small-scale cross-sectional studies. Another challenge to researchers is to mount more extensive and practice-oriented studies to investigate the various uses of dramatic play in diverse primary school settings. The limited research evidence suggests that educators should resist policies that reduce time for dramatic play experiences in primary school and try to increase funding for research on relationships between dramatic play and holistic child development in primary school (Baldwin, 2008).

## **Self-Concept in Childhood**

Self-concept has been related to the notion of self arising from interactions with others since the late 1800s (James, 1950). Other theories also support that the self does not develop in a vacuum but is defined through interactions with others and the environment (Baldwin, 1983). Following these early theories, most researchers have continued to study either the subjective or objective aspects of the self, thus focusing on only one part or another of the self (Cooley, 1964; Mead, 1962). Proponents of psychodynamic and cognitive social learning paradigms have continued in a vein similar

to that of early theorists (Bandura, 1982; Cantor & Mischel, 1979; Strachey, 1953).

Some other theorists have argued that the content and structure of the self-concept are unrelated, whereas others argue that they work in concert. Although content and structure in the self-concept have been separated qualities, both of them have been considered to be important (Showers, 1992).

Many of the difficulties associated with self-concept research can be traced directly to the ambiguity of the term. Because there is no consensus regarding the definition of self-concept, measurement instruments vary widely in their conceptual organization. An important and well-developed distinction in terminology in this field is that between self-esteem and other aspects of the self-concept (Damon & Hart, 1982). Self-esteem refers to the evaluative aspects of the self-concept and this construct has received the most attention in the self-development literature (Butler & Gasson, 2005; Harter, 1999). In contrast, other derivatives of the self-concept, such as self-perception and self-understanding refer to less significant evaluations of the self, i.e. how children view themselves largely independent of their subjective evaluation (Hart & Damon, 1986; Measelle, Ablow, Cowan, & Cowan, 2005).

Research on children's self-concept has received tremendous interest during the last 30 years. It was not until the early 1980s that most research on young children's self-concept was focused primarily on unidimensional aspects of the self. This was particularly the case for research with a developmental perspective (Kopp, 1982; Stipek, 1983). The work of Susan Harter has been instrumental in self-concept's developmental changes from childhood to adulthood. In her validation study of the perceived competence scale, Harter found that the accuracy of children's self perceptions increases systematically through the elementary school years (Harter, 1982).

Most researchers reject a strictly unidimensional construct of self-concept because it does not adequately explain behaviour in a wide variety of settings. They support the idea that the notion of self-concept is complex and composed of a large number of independent aspects (Linville, 1985; Marsh and Shavelson, 1985). Recently, however, a broader perspective on self-concept has been conceptualized and the development of self has been approached in a multidimensional manner. Self-concept has been characterized

as a dynamic, multifaceted construct that results from developmental interactions between the child and the environment (Stipek, Gralinski, & Kopp, 1990).

Given that self-perception in childhood may play a prominent role in shaping subsequent self-esteem, children's self-perception development is an important area of investigation in self-concept research (Damon & Hart, 1982; Hart & Damon, 1986). Self-concept has most recently been related to school success and academic achievement (Guay, Marsh, & Boivin, 2003; Marsh, 1992, Marsh & Koller, 2004). Students with high self-concept generally approach school-related tasks with confidence, which is not true for children with low self-concept (Hamachek, 1995). Persistent low self-concept has been linked to depression, eating disorders, suicide, adjustment problems, and later alcohol use (Harter & Marold, 1994; Swain & Wayman, 2004). Understanding self-concept can assist school counsellors in improving students' thoughts and feelings about themselves and thus greatly prevent occurrences of future behavioural and emotional difficulties.

## **The Present Study**

The aim of this study was to find out if dramatic play can be used as a means of developing primary school students' self-concept. In line with this basic purpose, the following research questions were asked:

1. Do dramatic play activities have positive effect on the development of primary students' self-concept?
2. Is the possible positive influence of dramatic play related to the age of students?

The study was carried out in two Greek schools in order to identify the effect of dramatic play on primary school students' self-concept. The study had a pre-post program-comparison group design in 8 public primary school classrooms, which included four experimental groups and four control groups. Totally, 141 children aged 8 to 11 years were asked to fill in questionnaires in an experimental process of pre and post testing, using the Harter's Perceived Competence Scale of measuring Children's self-concept.

## Method

### Participants

Two primary schools in a suburb of Athens, Helioupolis, were selected for the research. In the first school four classes, out of a total of 16 classes in grades 3-6, were selected as experimental teams. In the other school, four classes, out of a total of 16 classes in grades 3-6, were selected as control teams. The two primary schools were sharing the same premises and the children of these 8 classes were all middle to upper SES. The data collected were from 141 children aged 8 years through 11 years (66 boys, 75 girls). The sample was divided into two groups. The experimental teams included 68 children and the control teams included 73 children. For further details, Table 1 provides an analytical presentation of the total number of students both in the experimental and the control teams.

Table 1  
*Research Sample Composition*

	Experimental Teams			Control Teams		
	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total
3rd Grade	8	8	16	10	11	21
4th Grade	7	8	15	9	8	17
5th Grade	7	11	18	10	7	17
6th Grade	10	9	19	5	13	18
Total	32	36	68	34	39	73

The experimental intervention was arranged to last for about 18 weeks. The experimental group students participated in one hour per week in dramatic play sessions. The choice of this timetable was in accordance with the Greek Primary School curriculum.

The dramatic play experimental program framework included 18 sessions. A big part of the activities which were included in the intervention program concerned warm-up exercises and imaginative play with the body and material objects (Bolton, 1986). The activities of this type have been indicated as appropriate for children's sensitization, self growth, interpersonal interaction and creation of a climate of confidence between the students (Algate & Simmons, 1988; Dougill, 1987). The forms of dramatic activities

were located, mainly, in the world of reality, since the real content of dramatic activities is believed to better contribute to interaction, to negotiation and to collaboration between children (McMahon, 2002).

## **Type of the Research**

The experimental intervention is characterized as field research, since it was conducted in the natural environment of children as research subjects, and in particular, without making them feel their participation in the experimental procedure (Argyle, 1996; Hovland, 1959). The role of the researcher, being simultaneously a drama teacher of the experimental classes and a researcher, contributed to a natural process for the concretisation of the whole experimental undertaking (Middlewood, Coleman & Lumby, 1999; Pole & Keyes, 1999).

## **Means of Data Collection**

The basic research hypothesis was whether a concrete program for children's participation in dramatic play activities would positively affect their self-concept. The research was carried out during the school year 2009-10. The first measurement of variables in research subjects was carried out in September. The retest was conducted between March and April, four months later, after the end of the experimental intervention program.

The aim of this study was to utilize a reliable means of measuring students' self-concept. The search of suitable means of measuring self-concept showed that measuring self-concept is a difficult task. Among the measuring methods of revealing a person's self-concept, Harter's scale was adopted due to its widespread use in measuring children's self-concept and to its high validity and reliability (Harter, 1982; Matson, 2008; Wylie, 1974).

## **Procedures**

Particular emphasis was laid on the process of questionnaires' completion. Efforts were focused on methodological severity and meticulous concern for the reproduction

of identical conditions in all the classes. To achieve that, a scenario was invented by the researcher. According to it, the students were told that the questionnaire was not a test and their answers would be kept private, a fact that created a confidential atmosphere. The completion of the questionnaire was silently done after a first reading by the researcher. Clarifications to occasional queries were provided if asked for.

The time of the questionnaire completion was not predetermined; thus, it took as long as the last student needed to fill it in. The questionnaire of this measurement scale was designed for children between the ages of 8 to 18 years and consisted of 28 items, 7 in each of the three specific domains (cognitive, social, physical) and 7 that assess a child's general sense of self-concept. In each item the child was asked to indicate which kind of kid they would like to be like based on two alternatives. Then, the child was asked whether the corresponding description was either sort of true or really true. Each item was scored on a four-point scale, with 4 indicating the highest degree of perceived competence and 1 indicating the lowest. The scores were summed and then averaged for each subscale. (Arnett, 2007; Leondari & Gialamas, 1999).

## **Data Analysis**

In this inquiring study the independent variables were the content of dramatic play activities, the physical action of the students, the social interaction of the school team members, with the mediation of verbal and non-verbal communication, the age of students and the lack of students' participation in similar dramatic play activities within the control teams. In order to check better the effect of the independent variable of the dramatic play activities' content, the researcher applied the same research program in all the experimental classes.

The dependent variable was the children's self-concept, as this is expressed through the change in the values of variables in Harter's Perceived Competence Scale for Children. Factor analysis of this measure has yielded four dependent variables. These are defined and described as follows:

- a) The first variable is the *Academic Self-concept* factor, which is also related to a partial picture of one's self, which develops through a child's attendance in school success.



- b) The second variable is the *Social Self-concept* factor and it relates to a child's adequacy of social skills and of interpersonal relations.
- c) The third variable is the factor of *Physical Self-concept* and it relates to a child's capacity to engage in contact sports, games and outdoor activities.
- d) The fourth variable is the *General Self-concept factor*, and it relates to the child's self-perception and to the child's behaviour on others.

In order to check the multiple influences of other factors on the dependent variable of the research study, the researcher selected the control teams from the same population. Essentially, this facilitated reliability of the conclusions drawn through the application of the experimental program.

Statistical analyses in the present investigation were performed with the commercially available SPSS statistical package, version 19.0. Data were subjected to statistical analysis through the Student t-criterion working with the comparison of the difference between the average values of every research variable that has been measured on the same scale, at two different times (Agresti & Finlay, 1997; Lindzey, 1996; Tarling, 2008).

The basic application prerequisites for the Student t-criterion are: a) the experimental sample to be random and b) the considered dependent variables are supposed to follow the normal distribution and in our own case the t-distribution (Filiás, 1995; Gonzalez, 2009; Paraskevopoulos, 1972).

We suppose that the values of the dependent variables follow the t-distribution and we adopt the use of the parametric Student t-criterion in the statistical analysis of numerical data in each dependent variable (Adersons & Finn, 1996; Ravid, 2010; Sirkin, 1995).

## Results

The Cronbach alpha coefficient was used to calculate the reliability of Harter's Perceived Competence Scale. The reliability coefficient of this scale was for Pre-test: .88 and for Post-test: .90.

The research data statistical analysis reveals that our research assumptions were partly confirmed. In all the school classes in which the experimental intervention was carried out the positive effect of the experimental program is statistically confirmed in three of the dependent variables.

As shown in Tables 2 to 5, all the experimental classes revealed significant differences in three gain scores of the Perceived Competence Scale, except the score in the Academic self-concept factor. More specifically, in Table 2 the experimental class at grade 3 made a significant gain in three scores of the Perceived Competence Scale: social self-concept ( $M_{Control} = 3.06$ ;  $M_{Expt} = 3.50$ ,  $MD = -.43$ ,  $t = 3.416$ ,  $p < .01$ ); physical self-concept ( $M_{Control} = 3.06$ ;  $M_{Expt} = 3.56$ ,  $MD = -.50$ ,  $t = 3.162$ ,  $p < .01$ ); general self-concept ( $M_{Control} = 2.93$ ;  $M_{Expt} = 3.43$ ,  $MD = -.50$ ,  $t = 3.162$ ,  $p < .01$ ). On the contrary, no significant gain was observed in the score of the academic self-concept factor ( $M_{Control} = 3.06$ ;  $M_{Expt} = 3.18$ ,  $MD = -.12$ ,  $t = .696$ ,  $p = .497$ ).

Table 2

*Mean Scores of the Harter's Perceived Competence Scale for Children of Grade 3 in the Experimental Group & the Control Group*

Experimental Group (N=16)	Pre-test		Post-test		MD	SD	T Value	Sig (2-tailed) p
	M	SD	M	SD				
Academic Self-concept	3.06	.54	3.18	.52	-.12	.51	-.696	.497
Social Self-concept	3.06	.68	3.50	.63	-.43	.51	-3.416	.004**
Physical Self-concept	3.06	.58	3.56	.51	-.50	.53	-3.162	.006**
General Self-concept	2.93	.57	3.43	.52	-.50	.53	-3.162	.006**
Control Group (N=21)	Pre-test		Post-test		MD	SD	T Value	Sig (2-tailed) p
M	SD	M	SD					
Academic Self-concept	3.19	.60	3.00	.59	.19	.62	.777	.446
Social Self-concept	3.04	.49	2.95	.53	.09	.58	.491	.629
Physical Self-concept	3.33	.65	3.04	.64	.28	.70	1.451	.162
General Self-concept	3.04	.49	3.04	.56	.00	.60	.000	1.000
** $p < .01$								

As presented in Table 3, the experimental class at grade 4 made a significant gain in three scores of the Perceived Competence Scale: social self-concept ( $M_{Control} = 3.13$ ;  $M_{Expt} = 3.73$ ,  $MD = -.60$ ,  $t = 3.674$ ,  $p < .01$ ); physical self-concept ( $M_{Control} = 3.13$ ;  $M_{Expt} = 3.66$ ,  $MD = -.53$ ,  $t = 3.228$ ,  $p < .01$ ); general self-concept ( $M_{Control} = 2.93$ ;  $M_{Expt} = 3.66$ ,  $MD = -.73$ ,  $t = 3.556$ ,  $p < .01$ ). On the contrary, no significant gain was observed in the score of the academic self-concept factor ( $M_{Control} = 3.00$ ;  $M_{Expt} = 3.06$ ,  $MD = -.06$ ,  $t =$

.250,  $p = .806$ ).

Table 3

Mean Scores of the Harter's Perceived Competence Scale for Children of Grade 4 in the Experimental Group & the Control Group

Experimental Group (N=15)	Pre-test		Post-test		MD	SD	T Value	Sig. (2-tailed) <i>p</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>				
Academic Self-concept	3.00	.55	3.06	.59	-.06	.63	-.250	.806
Social Self-concept	3.13	.51	3.73	.45	-.60	.63	-3.674	.003**
Physical Self-concept	3.13	.51	3.66	.48	-.53	.63	-3.228	.006**
General Self-concept	2.93	.45	3.66	.51	-.73	.69	-3.556	.003**
Control Group (N=17)	Pre-test		Post-test		MD	SD	T Value	Sig. (2-tailed) <i>p</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>				
Academic Self-concept	3.17	.39	3.35	.49	-.17	.39	-1.852	.083
Social Self-concept	3.05	.42	3.29	.58	-.23	.56	-1.725	.104
Physical Self-concept	3.05	.42	3.17	.72	-.11	.69	-.696	.496
General Self-concept	3.17	.39	3.29	.58	-.11	.48	-1.000	.332
** $p < .01$								

As shown in Table 4, the experimental class at grade 5 made a significant gain in three scores of the Perceived Competence Scale: social self-concept ( $M_{Control} = 3.22$ ;  $M_{Expt} = 3.61$ ,  $MD = -.38$ ,  $t = 3.289$ ,  $p < .01$ ); physical self-concept ( $M_{Control} = 3.27$ ;  $M_{Expt} = 3.72$ ,  $MD = -.44$ ,  $t = 3.063$ ,  $p < .01$ ); general self-concept ( $M_{Control} = 3.38$ ;  $M_{Expt} = 3.83$ ,  $MD = -.44$ ,  $t = 3.063$ ,  $p < .01$ ). On the contrary, no significant gain was observed in the score of the Academic self-concept factor ( $M_{Control} = 3.66$ ;  $M_{Expt} = 3.66$ ,  $MD = -.06$ ,  $t = .000$ ,  $p = 1.000$ ).

Table 4

Mean Scores of the Harter's Perceived Competence Scale for Children of Grade 5 in the Experimental Group & the Control Group

Experimental Group (N=18)	Pre-test		Post-test		MD	SD	T Value	Sig. (2-tailed) p
	M	SD	M	SD				
Academic Self-concept	3.66	.48	3.66	.48	-.00	.59	.000	1.000
Social Self-concept	3.22	.42	3.61	.50	-.38	.50	-3.289	.004**
Physical Self-concept	3.27	.46	3.72	.46	-.44	.61	-3.063	.007**
General Self-concept	3.38	.50	3.83	.48	-.44	.61	-3.063	.007**
Control Group (N=17)	Pre-test		Post-test		MD	SD	T Value	Sig. (2-tailed) p
M	SD	M	SD					
Academic Self-concept	3.29	.46	3.47	.51	-.17	.39	-1.852	.083
Social Self-concept	3.29	.57	3.47	.51	-.17	.62	-1.000	.332
Physical Self-concept	3.47	.51	3.47	.51	-.00	.60	0.000	1.000
General Self-concept	3.35	.49	3.41	.50	.05	.24	-1.000	.332
** $p < .01$								

As presented in Table 5, the experimental class at grade 6 made a significant gain in three scores of the Perceived Competence Scale: social self-concept ( $M_{Control} = 3.26$ ;  $M_{Expt} = 3.63$ ,  $MD = -.36$ ,  $t = 3.240$ ,  $p < .01$ ); physical self-concept ( $M_{Control} = 3.26$ ;  $M_{Expt} = 3.78$ ,  $MD = -.52$ ,  $t = 3.293$ ,  $p < .01$ ); general self-concept ( $M_{Control} = 3.26$ ;  $M_{Expt} = 3.73$ ,  $MD = -.47$ ,  $t = 2.964$ ,  $p < .01$ ). On the contrary, no significant gain was observed in the score of the Academic self-concept factor ( $M_{Control} = 3.36$ ;  $M_{Expt} = 3.42$ ,  $MD = -.05$ ,  $t = .325$ ,  $p = .749$ ).

Table 5

*Mean Scores of the Harter's Perceived Competence Scale for Children of Grade 6 in the Experimental Group & the Control Group*

Experimental Group (N=19)	Pre-test <i>M SD</i>	Post-test <i>M SD</i>	<i>MD SD</i>	<i>T Value</i>	Sig. (2-tailed) <i>p</i>
Academic Self-concept	3.36 .59	3.42 .60	-.05 .70	-.325	.749
Social Self-concept	3.26 .45	3.63 .49	-.36 .49	- 3.240	.005**
Physical Self-concept	3.26 .56	3.78 .51	-.52 .59	- 3.293	.004**
General Self-concept	3.26 .56	3.73 .45	-.47 .59	- 2.964	.008**
Control Group (N=18)	Pre-test <i>M SD</i>	Post-test <i>M SD</i>	<i>MD SD</i>	<i>T Value</i>	Sig. (2-tailed) <i>p</i>
Academic Self-concept	3.16 .38	3.00 .59	-.38 .57	-2.122	.049
Social Self-concept	3.55 .40	3.38 .47	-.16 .58	- .900	.381
Physical Self-concept	3.16 .38	3.33 .44	-.16 .55	- .825	.421
General Self-concept	3.22 .42	3.27 .52	-.05 .57	- .270	.790
** $p < .01$					

As shown in Tables 2 to 5 no significant gain was observed in the scores of any self-concept variables, at the 1% level of significance, in any of these control classes.

The main research findings show that the answer to the first research question is affirmative. Dramatic play is a very important context of developing primary school students' self-concept. Furthermore, this dramatic play's positive influence is not related to the age of students, since the research expectations were finally confirmed in all research samples. Consequently, the independent variable, 'age of students' does not seem to suspend the positive effect of the independent variable 'dramatic play activities' on the development of children's self-concept.

## Discussion

The results of our inquiring study confirmed the main research hypothesis. To be more specific, the application of the intervention program, based on dramatic play activities, in the primary school classes, developed the students' self-concept. The confirmation of the main research expectation was attributed to the dramatic play activities' positive influence on each student, individually, but also to the school team, as a whole, which affected the students' opinion of themselves.

The disconfirmation of the research question, in terms of the academic self-concept factor, may be attributed to the fact that the dramatic play program did not include activities which were intended to transmit knowledge to the students. This aspect of self-concept had to do with the daily effort of students in other school subjects, a fact that each class teacher was responsible for.

More specifically, according to Bridgeman's research findings, the children's participation in dramatic play activities enabled them to realize their abilities, to develop their self-respect and to be more easily led to a more positive self-perception (1981, p.1231). Moreover, each student was sensitised to the needs, the wishes and attitudes of their classmates, through interaction with each other in dramatic play area (Boldstein, 1993; Narey, 2008). Thus, it was easier for the students to be led to a fertile exchange of their own opinions in order to improve their collaboration and to share common experiences and ideas, a fact that encouraged the improvement of their self-image (Doctoroff, 1997; Koster, 2011).

In self-directed dramatic play, children have an opportunity to re-enact their own life experiences and to acquire a different perception of themselves. They also communicate through a different code, they blunt their comprehension of the world, they learn through doing in a productive way and they are provided with suitable experiences which will help them face their future life (Byron, 1986; Goldstein, 1988; Mayesky, 2009).

A lot of researchers point out that the extent to which children become deliberate players, being aware of the dramatic play rules, leads them to the knowledge of their own identity, to the growth of their self-monitoring function and self-concept in the flow of playful interaction (Bolton, 1998; Walker, 2007). In dramatic play children impersonate characters and shape the perception of their own attitude as this is differentiated through their role in their play (Jackman, 2011; Stone & Farberman, 1986). Dramatic play is something more than a drama technique. It helps children enter imaginatively their world, develop their autonomy, extend their sovereignty and develop a healthy sense of their self (Bräuer, 2002; Courtney, 1989; McCaslin, 1984).

Recent studies show that if children are strengthened in their own self-concept,

they feel responsible for their actions and they believe in their abilities (Marion, 2007). Owning high self-concept, children increase the probability of success at the task and they are not easily discouraged by failure. In addition, they accept their feelings and they do not feel looked down on when they realize their weaknesses (Harrison, 2003). Last but not least, positive self-perception encourages the development of healthy interpersonal relations and influences a child's future faculty for successful professional and social incorporation (Nicotera, 1993, Rosenberg, 1986; Wigfield & Karpathian, 1991).

So far the main interest of the planning in education has mostly focused on the transmission of knowledge, rendering students passive recipients of received wisdom. In the light of recent views on the educational value of dramatic play and its great effect to promote a positive self-concept in children, the need for a dramatic play-based curriculum is considered the most urgent in Greek primary schools and all over the world.

There were a number of limitations to this study. First, a small number of children were included in each primary school grade. Therefore, the results may not be representative of boys and girls in general. Secondly, the children in this study were all middle to upper socioeconomic status (SES) and were not typical of the general population. Moreover, children were specifically chosen based on the population of two primary schools. Besides, they were selected on a basis of similar age.

Future research examining gender differences in the dimensions of children's self-concept as they change over time should probably include children from different SES backgrounds and different age ranges. This would better determine the effects of a program based on dramatic play activities which contribute to children's self-concept improvement.

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此為上文摘要中譯

# 戲劇性遊戲作為發展小學生自我概念的途徑

Asterios Tsiaras

希臘納夫普利翁大學戲劇研究學系助理教授

電郵: tsiast@yahoo.gr

## 摘要

本文檢視戲劇性遊戲對於發展小學生自我概念的途徑。本研究以八間公共小學的課室為研究範圍，研究數據來自 141 位由八歲至十一歲的兒童（其中 66 人為男童，75 人為女童），利用赫特量表去量度研究對象的自我概念。而本研究亦採用了實驗過程方式以比較研究對象在實驗前及實驗後的分別。經過對本研究所取得的數據進行分析後，結果顯示：

1. 戲劇性遊戲對於加強小學生的自我概念具有正面的影響。
2. 戲劇性遊戲對兒童自我概念發展的正面效應並不限於某個歲數的兒童，因為所有研究對象的樣本數據分析都能証實本研究的假設是成立的。

因此，如欲促進兒童自我概念的發展，校方或有關當局應更加專注以戲劇性遊戲為主的課程在小學教育的發展。

**關鍵詞：**研究調查、兒童、小學、戲劇性遊戲、自我概念

