

PAPER DETAILS

TITLE: Okul Öncesi Öğretmen Adaylarının Bütünleştirilmiş Program Hakkındaki Görüşleri

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PAGES: 33-49

ORIGINAL PDF URL: <https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/download/article-file/1487588>

Pre-Service Early Childhood Teachers' Views about Integrated Curriculum*

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Geliş Tarihi: 21.01.2015

Kabul Ediliş Tarihi: 20.04.2016

ABSTRACT

The goal of this study is to focus on pre-service early childhood teachers' views on the place of integrated curriculum in Turkish National Curriculum. The participants were 30 pre-service teachers enrolled in an Early Childhood Education program in a public university in Turkey. For this study, qualitative research design was used to explore pre-service early childhood teachers' views about integrated curriculum. The data were collected through reflection papers written by 20 pre-service early childhood teachers about the implementation of integrated curriculum in early childhood settings and interviews with ten pre-service teachers. The findings of the analysis indicated that pre-service teachers thought that integrated curriculum is a part of preschool curriculum. Most of them focused on the positive effects of integrated curriculum on children's learning progress. Moreover, they believed that early childhood teachers generally used integrated curriculum in their classroom practices such as in drama, literacy, and science activities.

Keywords: integrated curriculum, early childhood education, pre-service education, qualitative study.

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ÖZET

Bu çalışmanın amacı, okul öncesi öğretmen adaylarının bütünleştirilmiş programın Okul Öncesi Eğitim Programındaki yeri hakkındaki görüşlerinin ortaya çıkarılmasıdır. Bu çalışmanın katılımcılarını, Türkiye'de bulunan bir devlet üniversitesinin, Okul Öncesi Öğretmenliği Programına kayıtlı 30 okul öncesi öğretmen adayları oluşturmaktadır. Bu çalışmada, okul öncesi öğretmen adaylarının bütünleştirilmiş program hakkındaki görüşlerine ulaşmak için nitel araştırma yöntemi kullanılmıştır. Çalışmanın verileri, 20 okul öncesi öğretmen adayının okul öncesi eğitim kurumlarında bütünleştirilmiş programın uygulanması ile ilgili yazmış oldukları yazılı dökümanlar ve 10 okul öncesi öğretmen adayı ile yapılan mülakatlar yoluyla toplanmıştır. Çalışmanın sonucu, okul öncesi öğretmen adaylarının bütünleştirilmiş programı anaokulu müfredatının bir parçası olarak düşündüklerini göstermektedir. Çoğu öğretmen adayı bütünleştirilmiş programın çocuğun öğrenme sürecine sağladığı olumlu etkiler üzerine odaklanmıştır. Bununla birlikte, okul öncesi öğretmenlerinin bütünleştirilmiş programı daha çok drama, edebiyat ve fen etkinliklerinde kullandıklarını düşünmektedirler.

Anahtar kelimeler: Bütünleştirilmiş program, okul öncesi eğitim, hizmet öncesi eğitim, nitel çalışma.

* This article is a broader version of the paper presented at the WCCES (World Council of Comparative Education Societies) XIV. WORLD CONGRESS, Istanbul, Turkey, June 14-18, 2010.

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INTRODUCTION

The idea of “integrated curriculum” has been considered as an educational method since 1800s and early 1900s. John Dewey and Francis Parker shaped the idea of integrated curriculum (Hinde, 2005). Integrated curriculum was utilized to support the curriculum in order to reform lesson plans with other content areas (Beane, 1997). One of the most general definitions of integrated curriculum is the combination of two or more academic subjects in order to obtain one curriculum (Walker, 1995). In addition, Lake (1994) stated that some common keywords included in the definition of integrated curriculum are combined subject areas, project-based, rich sources, thematic units, and flexible grouping. As a term, curriculum integration has generally been referred to as “integrated curriculum” and “interdisciplinary curriculum”. Kysilka (1998) stated that other terms were also used to define it such as “integrated studies” (Stevenson & Carr, 1993), “correlation”, “fusion” and “core” (Vars, 1987), “co-related”, “multidisciplinary”, “interdisciplinary” and “integrated day” (Maurer, 1994). According to Beane (1997), integrated curriculum consists of four major aspects: integration of experiences, social integration, integration of knowledge, and integration as a curriculum design.

Models of Integration

There are three different models that represent the integration process during curriculum integration. These are Jacobs’ Continuum of Curriculum (1989), Fogarty’s Ten Levels of Curriculum Integration (1991), and Drake’s Continuum of Integration (1998). In order to apply integrated curriculum in a meaningful way, it is important to understand these three models in detail. The first model is Jacobs’ curriculum model (1989). Her model shows six levels that are “Discipline-Based design”, “Parallel disciplines”, “Multidisciplinary design”, “Interdisciplinary design”, “Integrated day design”, and “Complete integration”. She focuses on themes to support curriculum content. She also emphasizes the importance of real life experiences. In fact, educators have an opportunity to organize the learning process on the basis of children’s interests, needs, and works related to real life. The second model is Fogarty’s Ten Levels of Curriculum Integration (1991). He organized ten different levels to show curriculum integration. These levels vary from “Fragmented” to “Networked” integration. According to this model, if teachers prefer to work on one subject, they can use fragmented, connected, and nested forms in order to create an integrated curriculum. On the other hand, if they want to focus on more than one subject, they can work on sequenced, shared, webbed, threaded, and integrated designs of the integrated curriculum model. Moreover, immersed and networked patterns can be used to focus on children’s self-awareness about integration. The last model is Drake’s Continuum of Integration (1998). This model includes the continuum process from multidisciplinary to interdisciplinary and to transdisciplinary approaches. Indeed, six levels of continuum of integration are explained starting with traditional level of full integration: “Traditional”, “Fusion”, “Within One Subject”, “Multidisciplinary”, “Interdisciplinary”, and “Transdisciplinary” (Drake, 1998). All of these three models developed by Jacobs

(1998), Fogarty (1998), and Drake (1998) portray different issues about integrated curriculum in order to support curriculum development. These models also suggest essential methods to organize integrated curriculum design successfully (Wu, 2003).

There are several studies related to these integrated models in order to show the applications of integrated curriculum or interdisciplinary curriculum. In light of the literature about integrated models, the results of the studies demonstrate that this type of teaching supports student achievement as compared to traditional teaching (Cotton, 1982). Latham (1997) emphasizes that an integrated program helps students to improve their mathematical skills; in fact, results show that grades of females in integrated programs rise dramatically. In addition to academic achievements, integrated curriculum improves children's non-academic skills. For instance, a study reported that students perceived the teaching process as more fun and displayed less disruptive behaviors (Cole, 1994 as cited in Drake, 1998). Another research conducted by Geoghegan (1994) showed that students participated in a tribal theme integrated curriculum which includes drama, history, science, social studies, language, and physical and social development on the basis of arts. As a result of this, students understand the importance of showing respect to others and valuing others ideas. Moreover, these activities supported the development of their intrapersonal skills. That is, they contributed to the development of their own identities, too. Specifically, it is seen that integrated curriculum provides beneficial opportunities to students and teachers in the learning process. Indeed, according to Lake (1994), integrated curriculum does not include any bad effects on the learning process; furthermore, some students really learned more when integrated curriculum was applied. In addition, she maintains that integrated curriculum enhances teacher cooperation.

Early childhood teachers play an important role in selecting and implementing these integrated curriculum approaches that are mentioned above. While they are planning and implementing activities on the basis of integrated curriculum, they generally use their educational backgrounds and their prior classroom experiences. In fact, the literature indicates that educational background is one of the indicators of successful teaching experiences. Educational background may be defined as the overall educational experiences gained through one's pre-service years. According to McMullen and Alat (2002), educational experiences are perceived to be critical in affecting teachers' beliefs. In fact, Öztürk (2006) conducted a study in order to analyze in-service early childhood teachers' beliefs about integrated curriculum in terms of their years of experiences, their educational backgrounds, and whether they had attended courses or not. The results of this study showed that educational background was one of the important indicators of shaping teachers' beliefs about curriculum integration. It was also found that early childhood teachers who had graduated from university showed positive attitudes toward integrated curriculum because they believed that it was helpful for them to implement classroom activities into the educational process. In order to understand early childhood teachers' beliefs about integrated curriculum, it is also important to investigate pre-service

teachers' views about integrated curriculum. These views about integrated curriculum are good predictors of use in their future professional life.

The purpose of this study was to investigate pre-service early childhood teachers' views about integrated curriculum. More specifically, this study addressed their understanding about the implementation of integrated curriculum in early childhood classrooms. The following research questions were studied:

1. How do pre-service early childhood teachers define "integrated curriculum"?
2. What are the pre-service early childhood teachers' views about the implementation of "integrated curriculum"?
3. What are the pre-service early childhood teachers' ideas about the place of integrated curriculum in the "Turkish National Early Childhood Program (2006)"?

METHOD

Design of the Study

For this study, qualitative research design was used to explore pre-service early childhood teachers' views about integrated curriculum. In order to collect data, document analysis and semi-structured interviews were conducted.

Participants and Data Collection

Participants of this study consisted of 20 pre-service teachers who were enrolled in Early Childhood Education program in one of the public universities in Turkey. All participants were female in this study. The convenient sampling method was employed to select them. All of the participants completed the course related to curriculum in early childhood education during their second year of the program. Among these, ten of them were conveniently selected on the basis of accessibility for interviews.

The data were collected through (i) reflection papers written by 20 pre-service early childhood teachers about integrated curriculum and (ii) interviews with five third-year and five fourth-year pre-service early childhood teachers in order to obtain in-depth information.

Firstly, written data were collected to understand pre-service early childhood teachers' reflections about integrated curriculum. It was informed that participation was voluntary and the data were collected from students at the end of the class session. Twenty participants were asked to write their reflections including their perceptions on some issues such as the definition of integrated curriculum, positive and negative sides of integrated curriculum, impact on children's development, the appropriateness of integrated curriculum on the basis of National Early Childhood Program (2006), and one example of an integrated activity which is applicable in early childhood education. The National Early Childhood Program was revised in 2012 and all early childhood centers in Turkey was started to use it in September 2013. However, the data

collection for this study was completed before 2012. For that reason, this study was based on 2006 version of the National Early Childhood Program.

The interviews were conducted to collect more in-depth data on pre-service early childhood teachers' views about the issue of curriculum integration and the implementation of integrated curriculum. Ten pre-service early childhood teachers were interviewed with a semi-structured interview protocol consisting of 12 questions. The questions addressed the definition of integrated curriculum, models related to it, integrated activities for early childhood education, the evaluation of the program related to integrated curriculum in terms of children's development and teachers, examples related to pre-service early childhood teachers' experiences, and the place of the integrated curriculum in Turkish National Early Childhood Program (2006). The interviews were conducted at places selected by the participants; thus, participants felt comfortable. All interviews were audio-taped and conducted by the first author. The time periods of interviews were approximately half an hour.

Data Analysis

The written reflections of 20 pre-service early childhood teachers and the verbatim transcriptions of audio-taped interviews with ten pre-service teachers comprised the data for the study. The reflections were studied with the help of their answers about the questions in the reflection papers. The first author read all of the reflection papers and selected four main issues evident in their answers. These are definition of integrated curriculum; the effects of integrated curriculum on children's development, and the examples of integrated activities in early childhood education. The coding process was completed by another field expert in Early Childhood Education.

The collected data from interviews were investigated on the basis of inductive coding process (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The data were independently analyzed by the first author and another early childhood researcher. Firstly, they read all data several times in order to construct categories. Then, they compared the defined categories with each other and thus the main categories were selected. After the categories for coding were constructed, the first author re-read and coded the data. The same process was completed by another researcher.

The researchers also considered the validity of this study. In fact, Creswell (2007) highlights the importance of considering validation issues in qualitative studies. At least two of them can be used to show validation of the study. For this study, peer review or debriefing and external audits were used to ensure the validity of the study. Moreover, expert opinion was used to organize the process and the analysis of the study.

FINDINGS

The interviews were analyzed to examine pre-service early childhood teachers' understandings about integrated curriculum and the place of integrated curriculum in the Turkish National Early Childhood Program (2006). The results were organized on the basis of the place of integrated curriculum, the effects of integrated curriculum, the implementation of integrated activities, and the place of integrated curriculum in Turkish National Early Childhood Program (2006). The findings from interviews are reported, and then pre-service teachers' reflections are presented.

Firstly, to understand pre-service teachers' views about curriculum integration, whether they attended any course related to integrated curriculum was asked. All participants stated that they learnt the concept of integrated curriculum in their curriculum course as a chapter during their second year of undergraduate schooling.

The Issue of Integrated Curriculum

The issue of integrated curriculum was investigated through interviewing with ten pre-service early childhood teachers. The results showed that interviewed participants' definitions about integrated curriculum were about combining something in order to foster meaningful learning. While one of the participant pre-service teachers addressed the integration of activities with real life issues, nine of them mentioned the nature of integration as combining two or more activities with each other:

"It is implementation of an activity on the basis of different disciplines." (P7)

"It is a type of curriculum that combines different areas into a common area." (P8)

"It is a teaching process that provides opportunities to make a connection between different disciplines." (P4)

"It is a good way to teach something to children with the help of different activities." (P3)

When asked their views about models of integrated curriculum, two participants thought that these models were related to the core of the learning process:

"These models are about whether children are at the center of the curriculum or not." (P1)

"All of these models vary from traditional to child-centered." (P6)

Some others addressed different aspects of these models:

“The nature of these models is combining something together into the curriculum. However, the ways to integrate are different from one another.”(P9)

“It is more appropriate to apply these models to elementary or high school levels.”(P2)

However, six of them reported that they did not remember the details of the integrated curriculum models.

The participants also expressed that integrated curriculum plays an important role in early childhood education. At this point, while some participants emphasized the necessity of integrated curriculum, some others stated that it is ‘beneficial’ for children and teachers. One of the participant pre-service teacher stated that *“Integration of activities should be applied in classrooms because it provides an opportunity to be flexible in transitions between activities”* (P1) while another one mentioned that *“Integrated activities help teachers to organize the subject in a more clear way. As a result, children can learn lots of things by doing different activities”* (P4). Considering the effects of integrated curriculum on children and teachers, one of the participants stated that *“Integrated activities are helpful for both children and teachers. Implementing and planning integrated activities provide effective education”* (P6).

When looking at the examples of pre-service teachers’ perceptions related to integrated activities, all participants stated that all of the activities applied in early childhood settings could be integrated with each other. In fact, they addressed more specific integrated activities such as the following:

“In early childhood education, activities such as art, mathematics, and music can be combined with one another. Moreover, it is useful to integrate physical activities with art.” (P1)

“For example, integration of music and mathematics activities is a good example of curriculum integration. Moreover, we can integrate science with music activities.” (P4)

“As a teacher, we can combine art with all other activities in early childhood settings. For example, art can be integrated with science. Moreover, literature and physical activities can be combined.” (P6)

Briefly, all of the participating pre-service teachers stated that integration of activities provided opportunities for children to learn lots of concepts and skills meaningfully. All of them considered the use of integrated curriculum as a necessity for early childhood curriculum. For that reason, their examples about integrated activities included a variety of activities such as art, math, science, music, physical education, and drama.

The Effects of Integrated Curriculum

The participants were asked about their views regarding both the merits and adverse effects of integrated curriculum. They expressed their views on the basis of different perspectives.

Table 1. *Positive and Negative Aspects of Integrated Curriculum*

Participant #	Aspects	Statements
P1	Positive	"Children can learn by making connections."
	Negative	"If teachers cannot organize the activities properly, children may not realize what they are learning."
P2	Positive	"Children can integrate something in order to learn basic information."
	Negative	"Teachers should pay more attention to the planning process. Thus, they should spend a lot of time on planning, organizing, and applying integrated activities."
P3	Positive	"Children can learn different ways. Moreover, integrated activities provide opportunities for children to think creatively."
	Negative	"The negative sides of this curriculum depend on teachers' practices. If teachers cannot appropriately plan integrated activities, children cannot construct learning. As a result, children start to ask lots of questions about complexity in the activities."
P4	Positive	"It is helpful for the learning process to become meaningful and permanent".
	Negative	"It is difficult to apply integrated curriculum because teachers need more information about it."
P5	Positive	"Teachers can observe children's progress in a more detailed way."
	Negative	"It may take more time. Thus, this affects teachers' preparation for other activities."
P6	Positive	"Children enjoy themselves more because they see different things in an activity time period".
	Negative	"There can be discrepancy between the aims of the activities [integrated activities]."
P7	Positive	"Children can remember everything about connected concepts, thus the learning can be constructed in a more permanent way."
	Negative	"It depends on teachers' planning. If teachers cannot organize integrated activities in terms of children's age and developmental levels, this can make the activities more complex. Thus, there is a problem about applying integrated activities."
P8	Positive	"Integrated activities provide opportunity for children to understand different points of views".
	Negative	"Children cannot understand the common aim of the [integrated] activities."
P9	Positive	"Integrated activities play a dynamic role on the early childhood curriculum. As a result, children can willingly attend these types of activities."
	Negative	"Integrated activities may cause too much confusion about concepts"
P10	Positive	"Children can learn concepts meaningfully and understand easily".
	Negative	"Integrated activities may be difficult for children's progress."

As mentioned above, the participating pre-service teachers addressed the positive and negative sides of implementation of integrated activities in terms of different perspectives. While eight pre-service teachers focused on the positive effects of integrated curriculum on children's learning progress, two of them addressed the positive views in terms of the teachers and the program. However, participant pre-service teachers also thought that there were negative aspects of implementation of integrated curriculum. Most of them stressed the role of the teachers as a reason of negative outcomes. Generally, they stated the importance of teachers' planning and organizing experiences of integrated activities. Moreover, two of them indicated time management problems and the level of the difficulty as the adverse impacts of integrated curriculum.

The participant pre-service early childhood teachers had opportunities to observe teachers' classroom practices in their practicum courses. These observations were referred to as "one day practice" in early childhood instructions. All of these early childhood centers belong to the Ministry of National Education. For that reason, teachers who have been working in these institutions should follow the national guideline named as "National Early Childhood Program".

The participants were asked about the observed teachers' practices related to integrated curriculum in their practicum schools. Most of the participants stated that they had never seen the implementation of integrated activities. However, two of them mentioned that they have seen this type of integration. For example, one of the participants said that "I generally saw different integrated activities. However, *"the common thing is that teachers prefer to integrate different activities by using art"* (P5). Another pre-service teacher said that *"I saw that some of the teachers apply integrated activities in their classrooms"* (P6).

Participant pre-service teachers' experiences about integrated curriculum were related to their practicum practices. In their practicum days, they were expected to implement daily plans that they had prepared themselves. When asked about their experiences with integration of activities, all of the participants stated that they preferred to use integrated activities in their practicum days:

"In the beginning of the semester, our theme was "autumn". I organized an integrated activity by combining science and art. First, we made a field trip to see the changes in the weather. Then, we came back to the classroom and we made a drawing about what we saw during the field trip" (P3).

"I applied an integrated activity combining art, drama, science, and literacy. Our theme was "teeth". Firstly, children were asked to draw pictures about teeth. Thus, we can understand the children's understanding about teeth. Then, I applied a drama activity to include toothbrushes and teeth. After that, a dentist was invited to show the importance of dental care. Lastly, I selected a book related to dental care" (P5).

To summarize, all of the participants preferred to use integrated curriculum in their practicum practices. While some of them addressed integration of two different activities, some others focused on the integration of more than three activities.

The Place of The Integrated Curriculum in the Turkish National Early Childhood Program

The National Early Childhood Curriculum has been applied for four years. During participant pre-service teachers' educational life, there have been numerous opportunities to investigate the National Curriculum. The participants were asked about their opinions about the place of integrated curriculum in the current National Curriculum. Most of them viewed the National Curriculum as flexible. For that reason, they thought that integrated curriculum can be applied into this curriculum. However, they also stressed that the implementation of integrated activities were mainly related to teachers' understanding about the teaching process. One of the participants stated that:

"The National Curriculum does not include any term related to integrated curriculum. However, if we investigate the curriculum guideline in a detailed way, we can easily see the link between these curriculums" (P7).

"I think that our National Curriculum is flexible. At this point, I can say that National Curriculum helps children make learning meaningful through integrated activities" (P10).

The participants were asked their opinions about the implementation of integrated curriculum in early childhood institutions. Most of the participants stated that the implementation of integrated curriculum is mainly related to the teachers' attempts to organize the activities. This finding is supported by the reflections of pre-service teachers. One of the participants reflected:

"Teachers can use integrated activities in their classrooms. However, they should pay more attention to the planning process because the aim of the teachers should be to support children's different developmental areas" (R5).

"It is better to support children's learning experiences on the basis of theme. In fact, integrated curriculum is a good way to improve children's development. Of course, the role of the teachers cannot be ignored in this process" (R11).

"I think that I will use integrated curriculum in my professional life" (R9).

Participant pre-service teachers also mentioned that integrated curriculum improves children's whole development. They specifically stated that the children's cognitive and social-emotional developments were supported by integrated curriculum. Moreover, other developmental areas such as children's language and physical abilities indicated improvement with integrated curriculum.

In addition, some of them stressed the usage of real life experiences in integrated curriculum. They thought that children learn by doing. For that reason, they had developed positive views about the impact of integrated curriculum on meaningful learning. Some others viewed both parent involvement and school administration as other components of integrated curriculum. They explained that teachers should be supported by these two important agencies because these were not separate from one another.

In summary, participant pre-service teachers stressed that integrated curriculum would be efficient in supporting children's learning. On the other hand, they stated that the negative effects of integrated curriculum were related to teachers' inappropriate practices, time-management problems, and the level of difficulty. Moreover, participant pre-service teachers adopted positive views about the applicability of integrated curriculum in the National Early Childhood Curriculum.

DISCUSSION

The findings show that participating pre-service teachers have positive views about integrated curriculum. While all of them believed in the positive effects of integrated curriculum on children's development and the program, some of them mentioned some negative sides due to teachers' roles. Specifically, most of the participant pre-service teachers thought that integrated curriculum improved children's whole development. This finding has been supported by the literature. For example, Walker (1995) mentioned that integrated curriculum supports the whole child by providing different experiences in different developmental areas such as visual or oral. Moreover, Schirmacher (2002) stated that integrated curriculum emphasized the holistic model of development. This showed that it was helpful to foster children's various developmental areas.

Pre-service teachers' views about the implementation of integrated curriculum into the National Early Childhood Program were based on the similarity between the aims of integrated curriculum and the National Early Childhood Program. Both of them addressed some issues. The first one is about the child-centeredness. According to the National Early Childhood Program, it is important to consider children's age, developmental characteristics, interests, and needs (MEB, 2006). Considering integrated curriculum, educators prefer to choose different methods in order to support learning process such as using more flexible, child-centered and developmentally appropriate teaching practices (Jalongo & Stamp, 1997). Another issue is related to problem solving skills. Both program focused on problems for helping children to find different alternatives or solutions. National Early Childhood Program (2006) included problem-solving activities which foster children's problem solving skills. For this purpose, teachers should give alternatives to children and encourage children's creative problem solving abilities (MEB, 2006). Similarly, Etim (2005) focused on themes and real life problems as an integrated curriculum in

order to help children making and creating connections between and among subject areas. The findings were also consistent with the previous study which was related to in-service early childhood teachers' beliefs (Öztürk & Erden, 2011). In their study, Öztürk and Erden (2011) found that in-service early childhood teachers believed they needed more information about the application process of integrated curriculum. As a result, they could easily apply these activities. Moreover, in-service teachers thought that the implementation of integrated activities were parallel with the goals of National Early Childhood Curriculum in 2006.

Reggio Emilia Approach and Project Approach are good examples of integrated curriculum. Both of them address the issue of using integrated activities on the basis of themes or projects into their curriculums. In the project approach, the selected theme might be a general topic such as seasons and animals. On the basis of themes, teachers organize the experiences from different subject areas such as math, language, science as related to the theme (Helm & Katz, 2001). One of the characteristics of the Project work is to assist children's learning process in an integrated manner and prefer to eliminate the separations between subjects and play areas (Koster, 2001). Indeed, while children are engaging in projects, they try to make connections among, math, social studies, literature, and science in order to answer open-ended questions to develop the project (Curtis, 2002). In this study, participant pre-service teachers gave Reggio Emilia Approach and Project Approach as examples of integrated curriculum. They mainly focused on integrated activities in terms of themes.

All of these findings show that integrated curriculum is not a new idea in National Early Childhood Program (2006) in Turkey. That is, the nature of the integrated curriculum was found to be parallel with the aims of the Early Childhood curriculum. However, there was no explicit statement about integrated curriculum in the National Childhood Program document in 2006. For that reason, pre-service teachers stressed the teachers' roles during the implementation of integrated activities.

It is clear that the latest version of National Early Childhood Program is completely related to integrated aspects. In order to understand the interconnectedness between national program and integrated curriculum, it is good to compare them to each other. The National Program was revised in 2012. After pilot implementation period, the latest version of the Early Childhood Program was started to use in September 2013. This program has a developmental aspect to improve children's holistic development. It can provide clear purpose through supporting children's social and emotional, physical, cognitive, language and self-care skills. Moreover, the program has been categorized into different curriculum models. The shared idea of these is called as "child-centered" to provide opportunities for planning, implementing, arranging, investigating, researching, discussing and producing (National Early Childhood Program, 2013). Another important aspect of the program is the

flexibility of implementation process. Teachers are responsible for preparation, implementation and evaluation of the program. It gives teachers opportunity to implement activities either separate or integrated ways. Teachers are expected to strengthen their classroom practices on planning activities in the daily schedule. While organizing their activities, they plan them into three different ways: “integrated activities”, “integrated and combined them into one main activity” and “separate activities in a sequence” (National Early Childhood Program, 2013). All of these showed that both National Program and integrated curriculum are based on similar components.

CONCLUSION

The main conclusion offered by this study is the importance of pre-service early childhood teachers’ views about the issue of integrated curriculum. This study showed that pre-service early childhood teachers’ used integration as combining at least two different activities. In addition, they viewed the National Curriculum as flexible. Moreover, they stressed that the implementation of integrated activities were mainly related to teachers’ understanding about the teaching process. Thus, it is important to understand teachers’ views and attempts to organize the activities.

The current study showed pre-service teachers stressed that integrated curriculum would be successful in supporting children’s learning. However, there were some negative effects of integrated curriculum on teachers’ practices such as inappropriate practices, time-management problems, and the difficulty levels of the activities.

There were some limitations in data collection and data analysis processes. First, qualitative studies involve only a single individual or just a few which might not be representative of the general group or population. For this study, it was difficult to generalize the findings in similar case groups or settings. Therefore, the context, participants, and the nature of the study were described in detail so that the scope of the study could be understood better in employing the findings for similar contexts or participants.

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ÖZET

“Bütünleştirilmiş Program” fikri 1800 yıllardan ve 1900’lü yılların başlarından beri bir eğitim yöntemi olarak düşünülmektedir. John Dewey ve Fransis Parker, bütünleştirilmiş program fikrini şekillendiren uzmanlardır. En genel tanımı ile bütünleştirilmiş program, iki veya daha fazla akademik konunun bir müfredat elde etmek için birleştirilmesi şeklinde tanımlanmaktadır. Literatürde farklı bütünleştirme modelleri yer almaktadır. Bu modeller üzerine yapılan çalışmalar göstermektedir ki, bütünleştirilmiş program ile öğrenen çocukların geleneksel yöntemlerle öğrenen çocuklarla karşılaştırıldıklarında daha başarılı oldukları görülmektedir. Bununla birlikte, yapılan çalışmalarda bütünleştirilmiş programın çocukların akademik olmayan becerilerini de desteklediği ortaya çıkmıştır. Bu sayede çocukların derslerde daha çok eğlendikleri ve daha az davranışsal problemler sergiledikleri söylenmiştir. Tüm bunların sağlanabilmesi bütünleştirilmiş müfredatın doğru uygulanması gerekmektedir. Bütünleştirilmiş programın planlanması ve uygulanması aşamasında öğretmenler kendi eğitim geçmişlerini ve daha önceki sınıf içi deneyimlerini gözönünde bulundururlar. Bu bağlamda, hizmet öncesi eğitimde almış oldukları müfredat eğitimi öğretmenlerin öğretmenlik hayatlarında önem teşkil etmektedir. Bu amaçla bu çalışmada okul öncesi öğretmen adaylarının bütünleştirilmiş programın Okul Öncesi Eğitim Programındaki yeri hakkındaki görüşlerinin ortaya çıkarılması hedeflenmektedir. Bu çalışma okul öncesi öğretmen adaylarının bütünleştirilmiş programın okul öncesi eğitim sınıflarında uygulanması hakkındaki görüşlerine odaklanmıştır. Bu kapsamda, (1) Okul öncesi öğretmen adayları “bütünleştirilmiş program” ı nasıl tanımlamaktadırlar? (2) Okul öncesi öğretmen adaylarının “bütünleştirilmiş program” ın uygulanmasına bakış açıları nasıldır? (3) Okul öncesi öğretmen adaylarının bütünleştirilmiş programın “Okul Öncesi Eğitim Programı”ndaki yeri hakkındaki fikirleri nelerdir? araştırma soruları incelenmiştir.

Çalışmada, Okul Öncesi Öğretmenliği programına devam etmekte olan 20 öğretmen adayından bütünleştirilmiş programın okul öncesi eğitim kurumlarında uygulanması konusundaki düşüncelerini içeren yazılı dökümanlar incelenmiş ve 10 okul öncesi öğretmen adayı ile yarı-yapılandırılmış görüşmeler yapılmıştır. Katılımcı öğretmen adaylarının hepsi eğitimlerinin ikinci yılında “okul öncesi eğitimde müfredat” dersini başarı ile tamamlamışlardır. Veri toplama döneminde 2006 yılında kullanılmaya başlanan “Okul Öncesi Eğitim Programı” kullanıldığı için o program esas alınmıştır. Fakat, 2013 yılı Eylül ayı itibariyle yeniden düzenlenen yeni “Okul Öncesi Eğitim Programı” kullanılmaktadır. Yapılan görüşmelerde 12 sorudan oluşan yarı-yapılandırılmış görüşme formu kullanılmıştır. Bu form genel olarak bütünleştirilmiş programın tanımı, modelleri, okul öncesi eğitimdeki yeri ve programın değerlendirilmesi gibi soruları içermektedir. Toplanan verilerin analizi iki araştırmacı tarafından yapılmıştır. Kodlama ve analiz aşamasında katkı sağlayan uzman Okul Öncesi Öğretmenliği alanında çalışan bir araştırmacıdır.

Bu çalışmanın sonucunda, okul öncesi öğretmen adaylarının “bütünleştirilmiş program” ile ilgili herhangi bir ders almadıklarını, fakat, daha önce almış oldukları “Okul Öncesinde Müfredat” dersi kapsamında işlenen bir üniteye gördüklerini belirtmişlerdir. Görüşme yapılan okul öncesi öğretmen adaylarından 1 tanesi bütünleştirilmiş programı etkinliklerin gerçek yaşam durumları ile bütünleştirilmesi olarak tanımlarken 9 okul öncesi öğretmen adayı iki veya daha fazla etkinliğin birbirleri ile birleştirilmesi olarak tanımlamaktadır. Katılımcı bazı öğretmen adayları bütünleştirilmiş programın mutlaka uygulanması gereken bir yaklaşım olarak düşünürken, bazıları da çocuklar ve öğretmenler için yararlı bir program olarak düşünmüşlerdir. Tüm okul öncesi öğretmen adayların, okul öncesi sınıflarında uygulanan tüm etkinliklerin birbirleri ile bütünleştirilebileceğini savunmuşlardır. Özellikle, sanat, matematik, fen, müzik, beden eğitimi ve drama gibi etkinliklerin birbirleri ile kolaylıkla bütünleştirilebileceğini belirtmişlerdir. Örneğin bir öğretmen adayı, okul öncesi etkinliklerinden sanatı fen ve doğa etkinlikleri ile ve Türkçe dil etkinliklerini ise fiziksel etkinliklerle kolaylıkla bütünleştirebileceğini belirtmiştir. Katılımcı öğretmen adaylarına bütünleştirilmiş programın olumlu yanları nelerdir diye sorulduğunda, sekiz öğretmen adayı bu programın çocukların öğrenme sürecini olumlu etkilediğini belirtirken, iki öğretmen adayı ise öğretmen ve program açısından olumlu yanları olduğu görüşünü savunmaktadır. Bütünleştirilmiş programın olumsuz yanları konusunda ise çoğu öğretmen adayları öğretmen açısından olumsuz yaratacağını belirtmiştir. Etkinliklerin bütünleştirilmiş olarak planlanması ve organize edilmesinde öğretmen önemli rol oynamaktadır. Ayrıca, öğretmenlerin etkinliklerin uygulanması sırasında bazı zaman problemleri yaşayabilecekleri belirtilmiştir. Bunlara ek olarak, etkinliklerin zorluk derecelerinin ayarlanması konusunda da bazı karışıklıkların ortaya çıkabileceği ifade edilmiştir. Ayrıca, öğretmen adaylarına haftada bir gün devam ettikleri stajlarında bulunan öğretmenlerin bütünleştirilmiş program uygulamaları sorulduğunda, sadece 2 öğretmenin sınıflarında bütünleştirilmiş etkinlikler kullandıkları ortaya çıkmıştır. Öğretmen adaylarının stajlarında gerçekleştirdikleri bireysel uygulamalar sorulduğunda ise, staja gittikleri günlerdeki günlük planlarını kendilerinin hazırladığını ve özellikle bütünleştirilmiş etkinlik planları yapmayı tercih ettiklerini belirtmişlerdir.

Bu çalışmanın ortaya çıkardığı sonuçlardan biri okul öncesi öğretmen adaylarının bütünleştirilmiş programa bakış açılarının önemidir. Bu çalışma öğretmen adaylarının bütünleştirilmiş programı en az iki etkinliği birbirleri ile bütünleştirerek kullandıklarını göstermektedir. Özellikle, Türkiye’de uygulanan Okul Öncesi Eğitim Programı’nın esnek bir yapıda olmasından dolayı “bütünleştirilmiş program”ın uygulanmasının daha rahat olduğunu savunmaktadırlar. Ayrıca, etkinliklerinin bütünleştirilerek uygulanmasında okul öncesi öğretmenlerinin öğretim sürecine bakış açıları ile ilişkili olduğunu belirtmektedirler. Bu açıdan değerlendirildiğinde bu tür etkinliklerin organize edilmesinde öğretmenlerin düşüncelerini anlamının önemli olduğunu göstermektedir.

Çalışmanın sonuçları okul öncesi öğretmen adaylarının bütünleştirilmiş programı anaokulu müfredatının bir parçası olarak düşündüklerini göstermiştir. Çoğu öğretmen adayının bütünleştirilmiş etkinliklerin hem çocuklara hem de öğretmenlere olumlu etkileri olduğunu düşündüklerini göstermiştir. Katılımcı öğretmen adaylarının bütünleştirilmiş programın okul öncesinde sınıflarında kullanımının uygun olacağı ve uygulama sürecinde öğretmene bazı avantajlar sağlayacağını düşünmektedirler. Okul öncesi öğretmenliği müfredatında yer alan müfredat derslerinin içeriklerinin yeniden düzenlenmesi öğretmen adaylarının hizmet-öncesi eğitim dönemlerinde yeterli bilgiye ulaşmalarını ve bunları yapacakları stajlarda uygulayabilmeleri açısından önem taşımaktadır.