

THE OPINIONS OF THE PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS ABOUT EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION APPROACHES

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ABSTRACT

In this study, the opinions of the preschool teacher candidates about the perspective of the early childhood approach and the opinions of the child about the viewpoint, the role of the teacher, the types of resources used, the structure of the learning environment, the curriculum and the evaluation forms of the child were investigated. The Early Childhood Curricular Beliefs Inventory (ECCBI) was used by Jensen (2004), which was developed by Soydan (2013). The inventory has been applied to 317 pre-service teachers who are at Middle East Technical University and Akdeniz University Faculty of Education in the Early Childhood Education Department. In this study, it is seen that the pre-service teachers have adopted the Bank Street approach at the highest level, the High Scope approach at the second place, and the Montessori approach at the last place.

Keywords: Montessori Approach, Bank Street Approach, High Scope Approach, Early Childhood Education

OKUL ÖNCESİ ÖĞRETMEN ADAYLARININ ERKEN ÇOCUKLUK EĞİTİMİ YAKLAŞIMLARINA İLİŞKİN GÖRÜŞLERİ

ÖZET

Bu çalışmada okul öncesi öğretmen adaylarının erken çocukluk yaklaşımı perspektifine ilişkin görüşleri ve çocuğun bakış açısı, öğretmenin rolü, kullanılan kaynak türleri, öğrenme ortamının yapısı, müfredat hakkındaki görüşleri incelenmiştir. Soydan (2013) tarafından geliştirilen Jensen (2004) tarafından Erken Çocukluk Yaklaşımına İlişkin Görüşler ölçeği (ECCBI) kullanılmıştır. Envanter Orta Doğu Teknik Üniversitesi ve Akdeniz Üniversitesi Eğitim Fakültesi Erken Çocukluk Eğitimi Anabilim Dalı'nda görev yapan 317 öğretmen adayına uygulanmıştır. Bu arařtırmada öğretmen adaylarının en üst düzeyde Bank Street yaklaşımını, ikinci sırada High Scope yaklaşımını ve son olarak Montessori yaklaşımını benimsedikleri görülmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Montessori Yaklaşımı, Bank Street Yaklaşımı, High Scope Yaklaşımı, Okul Öncesi Eğitimi

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INTRODUCTION

Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) revealed the paradigm of freedom thought that formed the basis of libertarian education in the 18th century. Rousseau defended libertarian education; emotionalism against rationality, individualism against communism and freedom against oppression. Emile's book emphasizes a system in which the child is free and naturally raised, away from any repression against the child in education. Many western educators and philosophers such as Salzman, Pestalozzi and Froebel were also influenced by Rousseau's educational philosophy. On the other hand, Rousseau's approach to human nature has been a philosophical/ theoretical starting point for alternative educational pursuits (Ülken, 1967). The emergence of alternative education approaches also affected early childhood education and so different approaches emerged in preschool education such as Montessori, High Scope, Bank Street and etc.

The basic principle underlying the High Scope program is "effective learning". The other four basic principles are; "Positive adult-child interaction", "learning environment", "consistent daily schedule" and "evaluation". In the High Scope approach, the task of teachers is to provide an environment in which to develop effective learning and help children to think about their actions. In a sense, children learn by the means of scientific observation and intervention as far as development levels are concerned (Hohmann, Weikart and Epstein, 1995). Similar to High Scope Approach, in the Montessori approach, the individuality of the child is important. Freedom, the end result of individuality, is necessary for the child to be able to provide physical, mental and emotional development. This freedom includes a certain order and discipline. Again, as a result of your individuality, each child has a unique development and the point of view is right (Montessori, 1997). On the other hand, The Bank Street approach focuses on the experimental nature of education and provides training for children by constantly working with children and by experimenting with new ideas (activities, materials, etc.) instead of a planned curriculum. With this feature, part of the Bank Street approach seems to be a teaching, some of it a personal approach to the child. The approach is based on the teacher's knowledge and ability to recognize each child's individuality, ability and feedback to the child effectively (Fisher & Perryman, 2000).

Teachers' individual beliefs and practices in early childhood education are closely related to these curriculum approach and philosophy they have adopted (Charlesworth, Hart, Burts & Hernandez, 1991). At this point, the individual's beliefs about many aspects of the curriculum differ in relation to different approaches to early childhood education (Kohlberg & Mayer, 1972). Individual beliefs used in curriculum implementation are influenced by preschool approaches and show differences. Teachers construct their concepts of child development, curriculum and instruction as they interpret their beliefs by defining aspects such as the role of teachers, the child's vision, resources to be used, curriculum content, assessment methods and learning environment (Smith, 1992).

Early socialization in the field of teaching serves to shape and define a pre-service teachers' beliefs about educational practices and provides context for all new and existing information to be filtered (Pajares, 1993). These beliefs are the assumptions, attitudes and values of the individual regarding areas like teaching, learning, and etc. These are the beliefs that build the reality of the teacher candidate (Weinstein, 1989).

Teacher education students enter the classroom with the knowledge they have studied for years and the belief in a teaching they have developed with their experiences. Often these beliefs remain undiscovered and remain intact as if they were present in the program (Wright & Tuska, 1967).

Accordingly, the guiding research questions for this study were:

1. Is there a relationship between socio-demographic characteristics and early childhood education approaches?
2. Are there correlations between early childhood education approaches and scale's sub-dimensions?

1. METHODOLOGY

This research is aimed to determine the opinions of pre-service teachers about early childhood approaches. Scanning is an approach that aims to identify the past or present as it exists. In this research, early childhood education pre-service teachers' opinions about early childhood approaches are presented as they exist. In this respect, the research is descriptive (Büyüköztürk, 2002).

1.1. Sample

In this study, the inventory has been applied to 317 pre-service teachers who are at Middle East Technical University and Akdeniz University Faculty of Education in the Early Childhood Education Department.

1.2. Data Collection Tools and Data Analysis

The Early Childhood Curricular Beliefs Inventory (ECCBI) developed by Jensen (2004) and adapted to Turkish by Soydan (2013) has been used in the study. In order to calculate the scores of the answers given by the pre-service teachers in the analysis of the data, each of the scale items; It is scaled in the form of Absolutely Disagree (1), Disagree (2), Undecided (3), Agree (4), Strongly Agree (5). Descriptive statistics such as arithmetic mean, standard deviation, percent, frequency were used for the scores obtained in response to the answers given by teacher candidates to the five-point Likert-type scale.

Tablo 1: Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
,911	,927	72

The reliability of the scale (cronbachs alpha) was 0.91.

Confirmatory and explanatory factor analysis was conducted to determine the construct validity and factor structure of The Early Childhood Curricular Beliefs Inventory (ECCBI). The KMO value of 87 and the Bartlett Test were also significant. The data are suitable for factor analysis.

Table 2: KMO ve Bartlett

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		,870
	Approx. Chi-Square	8470,657
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	df	2556
	Sig.	,000

The Early Childhood Curricular Beliefs Inventory (ECCBI) scale's factor loads of the four dimensions included in the scale were examined with the Varimax Vertical Rotation Technique. According to Büyüköztürk; (2002), it is considered that the factor loadings are not below 30 and the variance amount is 40% in terms of behavioral sciences. In this direction we have been found to be gathered in 3 dimensions. The disclosure rate of total variance is 49.6%. The behavioral approach dimension was not included in the study because the variance was 29.4%. In Soydan's (2013) study, the scale was examined in 3 dimensions and the behavioral approach dimension was extracted.

2. RESULTS

2.1. Descriptive statistics

Some socio-demographic variables related to the participants are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Socio-Demographic Findings of Students

		Number	f
Gender	woman	284	89,6
	man	33	10,4
Age	18-20	91	28,7
	21-23	199	62,8
	24 +	27	8,5
Grade	1.grade	55	17,4
	2. grade	88	27,8
	3. grade	78	24,6
	4. grade	96	30,3
University	METU	115	36,3
	Akdeniz	202	63,7
GPA	3.51-4.00	57	18,0
	3.01-3.50	153	48,3
	2.51-3.00	74	23,3
	2.26-2.50	15	4,7
	2.01-2.25	8	2,5
	1.01-2.00	10	3,2
Total		371	100

Table 4: Lesson-Taking Situations Regarding Alternative / Different Approaches

		Sayı	Yüzde
During your training, have you learned about alternative approaches in education?	Yes	173	54,9
	No	143	45,1
Do you receive training / courses / seminars on alternative / different approaches besides undergraduate education?	Yes	37	11,7
	No	280	88,3
Total		317	100

While 54.9% of the students who participated in the research stated that they have taken courses about alternative approaches in education during education; 88.3% stated that they did not have any training/ courses/ seminars related to different approaches other than undergraduate education.

Table 5: Skill Perceptions for Using Alternative / Different Education Approaches

	Sayı	Yüzde
How do you evaluate your skills in using / implementing alternative / different approaches in education?		
Very inadequate	21	6,6
Inadequate	102	32,2
Medium-level adequate	155	48,9
Adequate	35	11
Very Adequate	4	1,3
Total	317	100

According to the findings in Table 5, 48.9% of the participants assessed moderately their ability to use / apply alternative / different approaches in education; but 4% saw themselves as very good skilled.

2.2. Correlation Statistics

Table 6: Correlation Analysis Between the Childhood Approaches Scale and its Sub-Dimensions

	1	2	3	4	5
Bank Street Approach (2)		1	,816**	,527**	,817**
High Scope Approach (3)			1	,584**	,844**
Montessori Approach (4)				1	,813**
Total (5)					1

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level

In the analysis of the correlation, it is seen that there is a positively meaningful relation between " The Early Childhood Curricular Beliefs Inventory (ECCBI) " and sub dimensions. When the relationship between the four subscales of the scale is examined, There is a significant positive correlation between the Bank Street approach and the High Scope approach (,816 **). Between the high scope approach and the Montessori approach (,584 **), and between the Bank Street approach and the Montessori approach (,527 **) a relationship exists.

Table 7: Participants' Views on the Sub-Dimensions of Early Childhood Approaches

	N	Mean	s.d	Min	Max
Bank Street Approach	317	4,21	,45	2,17	6,28
Montessori Approach	317	3,69	,41	2	4,94
High Scope Approach	317	4,15	,41	2,4	5

In Table 7, when the averages for the sub-dimensions of early childhood approaches are examined, It is seen that the students have adopted the "High Scope approach" (Mean: 4,15) higher than the Bank Street approach (Mean: 4.21) in education.

Table 8: Participants' Opinions on Early Childhood Approaches According to Sub-Dimensions

	Children		Teacher		Resources		Curriculum		Assessment		Environment	
	Mean	s.d.	Mean	s.d.	Mean	s.d.	Mean	s.d.	Mean	s.d.	Mean	s.d.
Bank Street Approach	4,26	,57	4,42	,54	4,21	,62	4,09	,61	4,09	,94	4,17	,62
High Scope Approach	4,24	,48	4,33	,55	4,20	,60	3,95	,59	4,21	,64	3,99	,61
Montessori Approach	3,28	,59	3,93	,60	3,56	,71	3,87	,63	3,63	,64	3,86	,62

In Table 8, participants' views of the Bank Street Approach from the Early Childhood Approach subscale (4, 26) and the High Scope Approach (4,33) and the Montessori approach (3,93) the role of the role is seen more often.

Table 9: Relationship Between the Sub-Dimensions of the Early Childhood Approach and the University

	University	N	Mean	s.d.	F	Sig.
Bank Street	METU	115	4,29	0,35	2,35	0,01
	Akdeniz	202	4,16	0,48		
Montessori	METU	115	3,62	0,37	2,24	0,02
	Akdeniz	202	3,73	0,43		
High Scope	METU	115	4,22	0,36	3,56	0,38
	Akdeniz	202	4,12	0,44		

Students included in the sampling group; T-tests were conducted to determine how the sub-dimensions of approaches change according to socio-demographic variables such as "university" and "taking lessons".

•A relationship was found with the reason that the significance of the three approaches was $p > .05$. When the averages were examined, it was seen that METU students mostly adopted the Bank Street approach and the High Scope approach.

•In the Montessori approach, it is seen that the students of the University of the Mediterranean are more familiar than the METU.

•During the undergraduate semesters, no relationship between these courses and the University has been detected.

Table 10: Relationship Between the Sub-Dimensions of Early Childhood Approach and Grade Level

		N	Mean	s.d.	F	Sig.
Montessori	1.grade	55	3,77	0,35	4,54	0,04
	2. grade	88	3,64	0,34		
	3. grade	78	3,58	0,51		
	4. grade	96	3,78	0,39		
High Scope	1. grade	55	4,23	0,35	2,9	0,03
	2. grade	88	4,07	0,34		
	3. grade	78	4,41	0,51		
	4. grade	96	4,22	0,41		

Students included in the sampling group; An ANOVA analysis was conducted to determine how the sub-dimensions of approaches differ according to socio-demographic variables such as "grade" and "grade average".

- There is a relationship between Montessori and the reason that the High Value of the High Scope Approach is $p > .05$.

- When the averages were examined, it was seen that the 4th grade students adopted the Montessori approach and the 3rd grade students adopted the High Scope approaches.

When the relationship between the grades of the students included in the sample group and the approaches is examined;

- The average of the grades between 1.01-2.00 is the Bank Street approach (sig .03),
- Those with a GPA of 3.51 to 4.00 seem to have adopted the High Scope approach (sig 0.002) at a higher level than the others.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

According to the findings, 48.9% of the participants assessed moderately their ability to use/ apply alternative/ different approaches in education; but 4% saw themselves as very good skilled. It can be argued that the reason for this is that the contents of the courses that the students take during undergraduate education do not have deep information about alternative education approaches and that alternative education approaches are not given as a separate compulsory course.

In this study, it is also seen that the pre-service teachers have adopted the Bank Street approach at the highest level, the High Scope approach at the second place, and the Montessori approach at the last place similar to the results of Soydan (2013). This result implies that teacher candidates have adopted some of their views on these approaches more often, while others have adopted fewer. For this reason, the implications of pre-service teachers' attitudes toward approaches at high level are examined. The findings show that the Bank Street approach has taken more views on the child's viewpoint, while the High Scope and Montessori approaches have taken more views on the role of the teacher.

The Bank Street approach is a child-centered education system. Children are individuals who actively learn, describe and practice experiences. Selection is an essential part of the learning program, actively researching, experimenting and exploring. The program can be shaped according to the skills and knowledge of the relevant group and does not need to create a constant program. Education is an effective tool to raise, create and increase democratic process participation in social justice (Cuffaro, Nager & Shapiro, 2000). The similarities between the views of the Bank Street approach and the perspective of the National Education pre-school education program are considered to be the reasons why the Bank Street approach has adopted the views of the child at the highest level.

In the Montessori approach, the teacher is responsible for the preparation of the environment and for children to engage with the environment. Teachers recognize the opportunity for children to use their potential for their own development, and in the Montessori approach the teacher is called the "facilitator" (Lillard, 1973). A teacher is someone who encourages children to learn, has enough knowledge about human development and growth, has observational skills to meet the developmental needs of children with materials and activities, allows children to move freely in pre-prepared environments. Teachers also have the ability to support learning physically and psychologically, using leadership skills in class (Morrison, 1998). In addition to being a very good observer, Montessori teacher is the person who can show the child how to use each material and provide individual guidance to the child (Temel, 1994). The task of the teacher is not to impose his or her knowledge and experience, to give them the opportunity to use their potential for their development; to motivate and prepare the child for social and cultural activities in the child-friendly environment (Morrison, 1998). On the other hand, children are more successful when they feel happy and safe. High Scope practitioners bring real sincerity and confidence to their relationships with children. At the same time, teachers respect and value each child's personal and cultural identity. Effective learning depends on positive adult-child interaction. For this reason, during the day, they are guided by the concept of "how to think about and make conclusions about preschool children". Adults work to be supportive as individuals who play games with children and talk and chat. They apply positive interaction strategies (Hohmann and Weikart, 2000) by sharing control with children, focusing on children's abilities, establishing internal relationships with children, supporting children's play and adopting a problem-solving approach to social conflicts.

The role of adults in the active learning environment is to be "supportive of development" and the main purpose is to encourage effective learning for children. In such an environment, adults do not tell their children what to learn, but they empower them to take control of their own learning by creating a suitable environment. Adults are not only active and participatory, but also observers and thinkers (Hohmann and Weikart, 2000). In the light of these information, National Education pre-school education program is thought to be similarities between the responsibilities given by the teacher. In the MoNE program, children are asked to record their observations regarding their motor, cognitive, language, social and emotional development and self-care skills and to prepare development reports. However, it is recommended that teachers evaluate the child through anecdotal records, development checklist portfolios.

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