



## Pre-Service Teachers' Perceptions of the Student Centered Learning Approach through a Metaphoric Perspective

### Metaforik Bir Bakış Açısıyla Öğretmen Adaylarının Öğrenci Merkezli Öğrenme Stratejisi Üzerindeki Algıları

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**ABSTRACT:** Changing needs of society require higher education institutions to promote new forms of knowledge, skills and responsibilities. This requires a shift from teacher centered curricula to learner centered curricula which leads to a change in the roles of teacher and student, activities to be designed and the approaches to be implemented. This study aims to examine the pre-service teacher's perceptions of student centered learning methodology based on their experiences in an elective course titled student centered education (SCE) through a metaphoric perspective. The study was done within qualitative research paradigm wherein an interpretive methodology was adopted. Phenomenology was used as the research design within interpretivism. Data were collected qualitatively within the format of using metaphors from 37 third year students in the Faculty of Education at Eastern Mediterranean University and analyzed through content analysis method. The study provided data regarding the importance of cooperative learning, teacher-student roles, self-regulation, autonomy and interaction in the student centered learning process. The contribution of student centered learning on the development of academic and social skills were underlined in the study. It can also be concluded from the study that student centered learning is effective due to the variety and diversity it provides in the ideas being exchanged and the strategies being developed.

**Keywords:** Autonomous learning, cooperative learning, student centered learning.

**ÖZ:** Toplumun değişen ihtiyaçları yüksek eğitim kurumlarının yeni bilgi türleri, becerileri ve sorumlulukları geliştirmesini gerektirir. Bu da programlarda öğretmen merkezli eğitimden öğrenci merkezli eğitime geçişi gerektirmektedir. Bu kapsamda, öğretmen-öğrenci rollerinde, etkinliklerin tasarımında ve uygulama yaklaşımlarında değişikliklere ihtiyaç duyulmaktadır. Bu çalışma öğretmen adaylarının öğrenci merkezli öğrenme stratejisi üzerindeki algılarını metaforik bir bakış açısıyla incelemeyi hedeflemektedir. Araştırmada nitel yaklaşım kapsamında yorumlama yöntemi kullanılmıştır. Araştırma verileri nitel olarak 37 öğretmen adayının deneyimlerini metaforik sözcükler kullanarak yazılı olarak ifade etmeleri aracılığı ile toplanmıştır. Çalışma, öğrenci merkezli öğrenme yaklaşımı sürecinde işbirlikli öğrenimin, öğretmen-öğrenci rollerinin, öğrencilerin öz düzenleme becerilerinin, öğrenmedeki özerkliklerinin ve etkileşimlerinin önemine dayalı veriler sunmaktadır. Öğrenci merkezli öğrenme yaklaşımının akademik ve sosyal becerilerin gelişimine olan katkısı vurgulanmaktadır. Bu yaklaşım, fikirlerin paylaşılmasında ve stratejilerin geliştirilmesinde çeşitlilik ve farklılık yaratmasından dolayı öğretmen adayları tarafından etkili bulunmuştur.

**Anahtar sözcükler:** İşbirlikçi öğrenme, öğrenci merkezli eğitim, özerk öğrenme

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The needs in economy, industry and society are changing rapidly requiring new forms of knowledge, skills and responsibilities. In accordance with this change, higher education programs are failing to provide curricula that meet the changing needs of students in this highly technological environment (Candella, Dalley & Benzel-Lindley 2006). These changing needs require higher education institutions to develop and foster new forms of knowledge, skills and responsibilities. These new forms of knowledge and skills necessitate a shift from teacher centered curricula which is content based to learner centered curricula which is process oriented

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and performance based (Candella et al. 2006; Hains & Smith 2012). It is no longer acceptable for students to acquire knowledge and develop reasoning skills in the conventional academic ways but make use of their knowledge outside the educational system and context (Immordino-Yang & Damasio 2007). This can be achieved by creating learning opportunities that evoke curiosity, interest, and higher order thinking as well as opportunities that provide practice and implementation.

Educators started to accept the idea that learning is a constructive process which emphasize the student as the main agent of learning “who not only takes more initiative but does so in conjunction with other students to make learning socially interactive rather than a one-way transfer of prepackaged information” (Hansen & Stephensen 2000, p. 41). Within this framework, students take ownership of their learning process by developing the course syllabus, prioritizing topic areas, establishing peer accountability, facilitating class sessions and engaging in ongoing evaluation (Hains & Smith 2006).

Accepting learning as a constructive process brings a change in the instructional approaches, methods and teacher-learner roles all of which are the most important elements to be considered in the design of curricula for pre-service teachers. According to Weimer’s (2002) working thesis, classrooms at the university level are extremely instructor-centered and this prevents students from becoming successful, mature learners. She identified the following five areas where the teacher-centeredness in curricula and classroom can clearly be observed: the balance of power, the function of content, the role of the teacher, the responsibility of learning and the purpose and processes of evaluation. Although there is growing interest in student-centered learning in higher education, there are constraints in the ways it is implemented which requires urgent improvement. Weimer (2002) observed that there is an imbalance in the power to be practiced by the teacher and the students. Almost all the decisions regarding the course such as content, the schedule, the conditions for learning, the attendance policies and the evaluation process are made by instructors. This inequality in the power of balance makes students in today’s universities as anxious and hesitant rather than empowered, confident and self-motivated. She recommended that professors need to share power with their students from the start.

The need to cover the course content and achieve the course objectives has been the major focus rather than student learning. Unmanageable amount of course content leads to memorization rather than conceptualization and usually the successful student is the one who acquires the ability to reproduce information (Weimer 2002). Hence, content heavy curricula leave little room for the development of skills such as decision making, critical thinking, reasoning, self- and peer assessment (Candella et al. 2006; Diekelman 2002; Ironside 2004; Seferoglu 2007; Tanner 2004). Weimer (2002) recommended university instructors to ‘use’ course content, not just as an end in itself, but as a means to help student learn how to learn. She underlined the skills to be developed as study skills, time management, the ability to express oneself orally and in writing, and computational skills.

Weimer (2002) suggested that the role of the teacher is to be reconsidered in order to implement learner-centered instruction effectively in today’s classrooms in higher education. The roles of the teacher and student need to change so that the teacher changes from the “sage on the stage” to the “guide on the side” who views the students not as empty vessels to be filled with knowledge but as seekers to be guided along their intellectual developmental journey. The other metaphors she used for describing the teacher are as midwife, coach and maestro. However, expectations of the students and preoccupied beliefs of teachers are working against this shift in roles (Felder & Brent 1996; Hains & Smith 2012; Weimer 2002). Students rely on the teacher to make all the decisions and the pedagogical literature focuses attention on what the teacher should do prioritizing teaching over learning. According to Weimer (2002), students initially resist the shift to student centered pedagogy because it requires them to take personal responsibility for

their learning. The reason that some faculty members resist to this shift is because they are comfortable with traditional teacher-centered curricula (Breunig 2005). It was reported in the studies by Akpınar and Gezer (2010) and Atay (2003) that teachers mostly covered topics through expository teaching method (presentation technique) since they considered themselves comfortable with the conventional teaching methods. They felt themselves insufficient in latest teaching-learning methods and in presenting the learning materials tailored to the needs of the learners. Another reason that faculty members are struggling against this shift is the western educational traditions that portray teachers as authorities since learner centered paradigms take the power from teachers and give it to students to direct and regulate their own learning (Estes 2004). In his study, Uysal (2004) stated that it is not appropriate to provide students with freedom to select course content and the teaching-learning methods to be used. Furthermore, Gür (2006) criticized those who think that the loss of teacher authority is an opportunity for providing freedom for the learners.

Despite some resistance, there are also views supporting the use of student centered learning method since it has been widely implemented in educational practices of different fields such as social sciences (Watters, Conley & Alexander 1998), business statistics (Lockwood & Pinto 2007), accounting (Adler, Milne & Stringer 2000), information systems (Law 2007), distance learning (Duffy & Kirkley 2004), virtual learning (Schiller 2010), and nursing education programs (Candela et al. 2006). Student centered learning method has also been successfully applied to reform education in countries such as Thailand (Khemmani 2006). This method has also been developed and proposed as a model to be implemented by the national ministry of education in Turkey (TC Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı 2007). Hence, it can be stated that it is desirable to make a shift toward a model in which students are actively engaged in the learning process for effective learning. Studies wherein students were actively involved into the learning process through different techniques all report that learning and understanding were greater (Akbiyık, Karadüz & Seferoglu 2013; Cantone 2001; Knight & Woods 2005; Oldenburg 2005; Salter, Pang & Sharma 2009).

As Weimer (2002) stressed, the responsibility for learning shifts to the student when a learner centered approach is applied. However, she believed that today's students are "unable to function without structure and imposed control" and have "little or no commitment to learning". They are concerned with getting a good grade and when they cannot achieve this, the teacher is to be blamed. Shifting the responsibility for learning to the student will bring the notion of self-regulated learning with itself. As Pintrich (2000) defined it, self-regulated learning is "an active, constructive process whereby learners set goals for their learning and then attempt to monitor, regulate, and control their cognition, motivation, and behavior, guided and constrained by their goals and the contextual features in the environment" (p. 453). Therefore, when content is delivered through learner centered methods, students are believed to process knowledge better because they are given the opportunity to monitor, regulate and control their learning by being actively involved in the learning process rather than simply passively receiving the information from a lecture (Slunt & Giancarlo 2004).

When the major concern of learner-centered methodologies is learning, then the major concern of evaluation in this pedagogy becomes not to score student papers but to promote learning. The purpose and processes used for evaluation in the learner centered methodology also change. Self- and peer assessment becomes a major part of the evaluation processes enabling students to assess their own work and that of their peers by asking critical questions in a constructive manner (Weimer 2002). The aim in evaluation is not only to focus on the performance of the students as a product but to monitor the learning process the students live through. The criteria for evaluation are determined by the instructor and students collaboratively so students become more conscious of what is expected from them. Students are not only evaluated through pencil and paper exams but through a variety of activities which give students

opportunities to display their knowledge and skills in many different ways. Portfolios are an effective means to actively involve students into both learning and evaluating their own performances (Özer 2008).

Based on the literature reviewed, it can be concluded that teacher candidates graduating from Faculty of Education programs at EMU must have the competency of implementing student centered education as an approach in their future careers. Student Centered Education course was launched as an elective course for the purpose to have the students attain these competencies. Implementing this learner-centered education course might lead to acceptance of or resistance to learner centered approach; hence, this study aims to examine pre-service teacher's perceptions of student centered learning methodology based on their experiences in this course. This will lead the researchers to conclude whether or not the students are willing to benefit from this approach in their future careers. If the results are positive, the approach used in this course can be extended to be used in other courses that the pre-service teachers take. Therefore, the following research question was set up to investigate this problem: What do pre-service teachers report about student centered pedagogy as an instructional approach based on their experiences in this student centered education course? The study is significant in that it presents data regarding pre-service teachers' perceptions about student centered learning as an approach, and teacher-learner roles adopted during instruction (as well as their acceptance and resistance) through a metaphoric perspective. The study provided interesting findings regarding the nature, structure and philosophy of the student centered learning pedagogy which might offer multiple perspectives for educators in different parts of the world.

## **2. METHOD**

### **2.1 Research Design**

The study was done within qualitative research paradigm wherein interpretivism was adopted as an epistemological position. Phenomenology was used as the research design within interpretivism. The phenomenological research design emphasizes the understanding of the social world through an examination of the interpretation of that world by its participants. The advocates of phenomenology as a research design claim that "it is the job of the social scientist to gain access to people's 'common-sense thinking' and hence to interpret their actions and their social world from their point of view" (Bryman 2004 p. 14). Schutz (1962, cited in Bryman 2004) expresses a commitment to viewing events and social world through the eyes of the people being studied. In order to grasp the meaning of a person's behavior, the phenomenologist attempts to see things from that person's point of view (Bogdan & Taylor 1975).

### **2.2 Study Group**

The study group included 37 third year students, 23 of which were females and 14 were males studying in different teacher education programs in the Faculty of Education at Eastern Mediterranean University were the participants of the study. Seventeen of the participants were majoring in the guidance and psychological counseling, 15 in elementary school teacher education and 5 in social sciences teacher education. Since the participants were the students naturally registered into the researcher's groups of Student Centered Education course during 2011-12 Spring semester, they were all included into the study group.

### 2.3 Procedure

Student Centered Education course was implemented within the student centered learning methodology framework covering the content of student centered education course through integrating discovery learning, cooperative learning, research based and constructivist learning approaches with the appropriate techniques such as case study analysis, brainstorming, debate, discussion, De Bono's six thinking hats, conversation circle, and station techniques. During the first 5 weeks, the definition, aims, principles, teacher-student roles, approaches, methods and techniques, and measurement and evaluation in student education course was covered. In the following five weeks, students prepared a micro-teaching on a topic of their own choice as groups related with their fields of study using one of the techniques or a combination of two and performed their teaching. After each performance, group members were responsible for assessing themselves as a group and the performances of the other groups as critical friends according to a checklist which included assessment criteria formed by the class members themselves. The last in-class activity of the semester was to write a critical report on a movie titled 'school of life' wherein a comparison of teacher centered and student centered education systems were depicted. The final activity they were supposed to submit was the end-of-the-semester reflective essays wherein they evaluated the student centered education course according to its weaknesses, strengths and suggestions on modification of the course.

### 2.4 Data Collection Method

Data was collected qualitatively within the format of using metaphors. At the end of the semester, pre-service teachers were asked to write their perceptions about their experiences of the student centered education course by using metaphors. They were given the question "If you would define student centered education course that you have just completed by using a metaphor, which metaphor would you use? Please explain the reason why you have specifically used such a metaphor by providing justifications" on a paper and were asked to provide their responses in writing. The data was collected after the submissions of the letter grades so as to enable students express their views freely without a fear of threat by the course instructor. Metaphors are considered as a way to reveal a person's underlying thinking or understanding of a domain (Blackwell 1989). It helps participants to uncover the hidden or the unexpected messages about the issue in an indirect way (Hesse 1966). Black (1979) also suggested that a metaphorical statement can lead to new knowledge or insight about the issue under consideration. Rather than directly questioning the participants about their perceptions of the student centered learning methodology, the researcher preferred to collect the data in the form of metaphors to create opportunities for the participants to uncover their views, beliefs and perceptions in an indirect manner.

### 2.5 Data Analysis Method

Data collected through metaphor writing was analyzed through content analysis method. Content analysis involves identifying, coding, categorizing, classifying and labeling the primary patterns/occurring themes in the data (Miles & Huberman 1994; Patton 2002). The metaphors were read one by one and the messages they intended to communicate were noted down by the researchers separately. Then the main idea of each message was analyzed to find out which aspect of the student centered methodology was underlined. The results were crosschecked by the researchers by comparing and contrasting so as to eliminate the unclear ideas and establish common themes; thus enhancing inter-rater reliability (Denzin & Lincoln 2000). Next, the metaphors were grouped according to the similarity of the main ideas they communicated and the major categories/themes emerged as different aspects of the student centered methodology. The

data has gone through peer debriefing process which is believed to increase the conformability of the findings as well. The participants of the study were coded as ST standing for student teacher accompanied with a number (E.g. ST1, ST2, ST3... etc.)

### 3. RESULTS

When the metaphors were grouped depending on the main ideas that they communicated, they yielded some emerging themes. Then, these emerging themes were categorized as cooperative learning, self-regulation and autonomous learning, teacher-student roles, interactive aspect of the approach, teacher holding a traditional role, and students holding introvert personality. Findings related to these categories will be presented in the following section.

Metaphors related to cooperative learning category and the emerging themes are given below:

#### Category 1: Cooperative Learning

**Table 1: Metaphors for Cooperative Learning**

Like immigrating birds flying in V-shape collectively helping each other
Like an orchestra with its members playing different instruments and teacher as the conductor
Like 'two heads' who are better than one
Like a group of different colored butterflies flying in the same direction
Like smurfs living collectively with the father smurf – smurfs with different characters and personalities
Like a football team with all its different members

#### *Themes of Category 1: Group Work, Collaboration, Diversity, and Variety in Learning*

When students were asked to define their experiences of the Student Centered Education course by using a metaphor, they have used the above given metaphors. The metaphors they have used and the explanations they have made indicate that they have practiced cooperative learning. Almost in all the metaphors, the notion of doing something as a group collectively exists. Other themes that emerged from these metaphors are diversity and variety both of which are aspects of cooperative learning as stated by ST9 below:

*“I could define student centered course that we had as an orchestra. The teacher is the orchestra conductor; and students are like the musicians playing different instruments and producing different sounds. Every musician has different characteristics and abilities but play the instruments in harmony for a good performance. The students working in groups are like the musicians in an orchestra because they all express different ideas with different philosophies to achieve the goals of the group project and the teacher is just a guide”*

Their explanations indicate that when individuals work together, diverse and varied ideas are produced due to their cultural, educational and social differences and the quality of the product becomes better.

Metaphors related to self-regulation and autonomous learning category and the emerging themes are given below:

## Category 2: Self-regulation and Autonomous Learning

**Table 2: Metaphors for Self-regulation and Autonomous Learning**

Like a parachute jumper doing parachute jumping on its own
Like astronauts in a spaceship without a pilot and control
Like a diver who dive into the sea and discover/learn the life under the sea on his/her own
Like a traveler in the old Turkish saying "is it the reader or the traveler who knows the most?" Not learning from books only but learning by doing, applying and analyzing
Like a spaceship not controlled by the captain but by the crew
Like a pearl discovered and activated from very deep water
Like a sailor in the sea sailing alone in a small boat in the middle of the sea but like someone who is free to sail in any direction to discover the place s/he wants
Students are like the driver and SCE course is like an automobile (a vehicle): students drive in the way they want according to their interests

### *Themes of Category 2: Taking an Active Role in learning, Discovering Knowledge (Discovery Learning Approach), Learning by Doing, and the Responsibility for Learning*

Most of the metaphors used in this category indicate that students self-regulated their own learning according to their own needs and interests and became autonomous learners as a result of the learning experience they have gone through during student centered education course. The metaphors they have used and the explanations they have made point out that the student centered learning methodology which was used in the class enabled them to take an active role in their own learning, to discover knowledge on their own and to learn by implementing. Similarly, the students in the student centered course were like divers; they learnt by doing and discovering on their own. They didn't get knowledge theoretically but by reading, analyzing and synthesizing. It can be observed from these metaphors that the responsibility for learning was shifted to the learners as stated by ST6 below:

*"I can define SCE course as diving because divers go into the deep sea and discover things by doing and researching. They learn by making mistakes. With the help of their teachers, they do not discover the sea on the surface but deep inside. Similarly, we did the same in this course. We had the responsibility to discover and share by doing"*

The metaphors that the participants used and the justifications they have made state that they were given an active role during the activities which helped them discover knowledge and learn by doing which in return enabled them to self-regulate their learning and hence become autonomous learners. Metaphors related to the importance of teacher-student roles and the emerging themes are given below:

## Category 3: The Importance of Teacher-Student Roles

**Table 3: Metaphors for the Importance of Teacher-Student Roles**

Teacher is the technical director of a football team and students are the football players actively playing the game
Teacher as the trainer in a driving course and students as the learners doing all the job
Teacher as the main queen bee guiding and students are like worker bees working collectively and cooperatively to make honey
Teacher as the exceptional tourist guide and we were the tourists and she guided us to discover the places visited from different perspectives.

***Themes of category 3: Teacher as a Guide, Facilitator, Students as Appliers, Producers, Explorers.***

The above given metaphors focused on the teacher-student roles which were adopted during the implementation of the student centered learning methodology. It can be interpreted from the metaphors that there was a shift in the responsibility for learning and students were empowered to become self-directed learners. The teacher just acted as the facilitator and guide facilitating the learners and it was the students doing the entire job actively. The students depicted themselves as doers, producers, explorers and analyzers through the metaphors they have written as stated by the ST28 below:

*“I would describe teacher as the technical director of a football team and students as the players in this team. Just like a technical director guides and gives some techniques for his players, our teacher was also like a guide guiding us and stimulating us in finding our ways through. It is the players actively playing the match for winning and we also actively worked together as a group to achieve the goals of each task during the course”.*

Their metaphors and explanations indicate that students were given active roles during activities and teacher was just a guide and a facilitator which provided them with the opportunities to implement and discover knowledge.

Metaphors related to the interactive and creativity aspect of SCE as an approach and the emerging themes are given below:

**Category 4: Interactive and Creativity Aspect of SCE as an Approach**

**Table 4: Metaphors for Interactive and Creativity Aspect of SCE as an Approach**

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The course was like an open forum/panel because every student in class was able to express and share their ideas on any topic or reject others' ideas with respect.

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SCE was like a space because space is infinite and similarly the opportunities provided to the students in the SCE system are also infinite. Depending on the students' choices, creativity and interests; topics are covered and ideas are shared in different ways.

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SCE course was like the lover I have always dreamt of having because I was able to freely express myself and my lover (the course) provided me with the opportunity to talk and listened by others respectfully. My lover (the course) did not attempt to direct or control me; we attained responsibility towards each other.

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***Themes of Category 4: Sharing Ideas Freely and Respectfully, Variety, Students' Interests and Choices, the Responsibility for Learning***

The metaphors grouped in this category underline the importance of interaction which was achieved through sharing and expressing ideas freely and respectfully. According to the students, this interaction was also fed by students' interests and choices which led to variety and creativity as stated by the ST13:

*“I would use the metaphor ‘open forum’ on a TV program because we were like the participants of an open form in the way we had the freedom to express our ideas, views and critiques in a respectful manner. This made our lesson dynamic, interactive and active. We continuously interacted with each other which caused variety and responsibility”*

The metaphors used and the explanations made indicate that pre-service teachers' interests and choices were taken into consideration while the topics were covered which gave rise to interaction, variety and creativity.



Metaphors related to the place of introvert personalities in learner centered activities and the emerging themes are given below:

### **Category 5: The Place of Introvert Personalities in Learner Centered Activities**

**Table 5: The Place of Introvert Personalities in Learner Centered Activities**

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Like a lonely person in a crowd who had difficulty expressing myself because I prefer to be alone and not to speak a lot

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Like a Turk in a French speaking group because I was silent in general. While everyone felt free to express themselves I didn't because of my introvert personality

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#### ***Themes of Category 5: Lonely Person, Difficulty Expressing Oneself***

The above given metaphors underline the difficulty that introvert personalities had during learner-centered activities. They indicated that they had difficulty expressing themselves and preferred to be silent and left alone. This situation affected their interaction with other students and their active involvement into the activities.

## **4. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

The following section has been devoted to the discussion and conclusion of findings of this study in relation to the findings of other researchers in other parts of the world. Each category will be taken separately and interpreted according to the related to the themes under these categories.

### **4.1. Discussion**

The first category has been identified as 'cooperative learning' and the related themes were group work, collaboration, diversity, and variety in learning. In parallel to the findings of this study, research done in different parts of the world stated that cooperative learning is likely to create and facilitate learner growth, improve students' involvement and transmission of knowledge, communication skills, increase innovation and lead to better output and success (Singh 2011). In their list of key characteristics of learner-centered classrooms, McCombs and Whisler (1997) indicated that teacher provides opportunities for students to collaborate with peers of different ages, cultures and abilities and include peer teaching as a part of instruction. Kohonen (1992) asserted that cooperative learning can build positive interdependence and individual accountability among learners since each individual tries to contribute to the product of group and therefore is responsible for helping his/her group members to learn. Christiansen & Bell (2010) also supported this view adding that when working with peers, there is more pressure to pursue higher levels of thinking and learning to compete and do the best they can in their groups as stated by the students in this study. This leads to learning accountability, cooperation, being conscientious of completing their part. It is also believed that collaboration develop learners' social and learning skills and help them construct their own knowledge through an exchange of ideas (Singh 2011).

The second category has been identified as 'self-regulation and autonomous learning' and the related themes were taking an active role in learning, discovering knowledge (discovery learning approach), learning by doing, and the responsibility for learning. According to the assumptions of the learner centered model listed by McCombs and Whisler (1997), learning is a constructive process that occurs best when the learner is actively engaged in creating his or her own knowledge and understanding by connecting new knowledge with the prior one. They added

that in a learner centered class, the teacher encourages shared decision making and student autonomy and gives students increasing responsibility for their learning as emphasized by the participants of this study as well. Weatherholtz (2003) stated that in the learner-centered classrooms, students learn to have an access into their own work and take part in the assessment of their peers' work, which helps them to become self-directed learners. The findings of this study are in harmony with the findings of Broady and Kenning (1996) who claimed that greater autonomy might be gained by engaging students in taking responsibility for the planning and delivery of their learning. The participants of this study have also stated that they were given the opportunity to take responsibility and regulate their learning through the teaching-learning methods implemented in the course. Furthermore, findings of this study are supported by the findings of Simao and Flores (2010) who reported that students developed their self-regulatory competencies which enabled them to manage their own learning in a more autonomous way in learner centered classrooms. To meet the changing needs of today's society, learners need to be autonomous and self-regulate their own learning which is possible by shifting the responsibility for learning from teachers to students (Weimer 2002).

The third category has been identified as 'the importance of teacher-student roles' and the related themes were teacher as a guide, facilitator, students as doer, applier, producer, and creator. There seems to be change in the roles of the teacher and students since the teacher is not the source of knowledge and director of the activities anymore and students are not the passive receivers of the knowledge. As described by Weimer (2002) students are "seekers to be guided along their intellectual developmental journey" (p. 93). Similarly, the participants of this study have used metaphors depicting the teacher's role as the guide and the facilitator creating learning environments and opportunities for their students and themselves as doers and appliers. However, although the metaphors used in this category empower students in many ways, still learners have not depicted themselves as individuals doing critical analysis, self-reflection and problem-solving which are the competencies student-centered methodologies are expected to develop (Candella et al. 2006).

The fourth category has been identified as the 'interactive and creativity aspect of SCE as an approach' and the related themes were sharing ideas freely and respectfully, variety, students' interests and choices, and the responsibility for learning. As Law (2007) indicated the instructors act as mentors and advisors to encourage students' participation through active learning as was emphasized by the participants of this study. Interactions between instructors and the students among themselves facilitate the learning process through discovery, inquiry and problem solving. In parallel to the findings of this study, Liang (2007) also stated that students learn through interacting with others in pair, group or whole class activities which help them activate their previous knowledge and improve their communicative skills. Hence, it can be concluded that student centered tasks increase interaction which contributes to the academic and social development of students. Simao & Flores (2010) considered interaction as a key element in the program that they have developed since it acts as a catalyst of the construction, reconstruction, change, interpretation, and making sense of knowledge. The findings of this study are in harmony with the findings of Simao & Flore (2010) since they reported that student autonomy and creativity have been promoted by providing students in the program with the opportunities to participate and interact in the teaching-learning processes.

The fifth category has been identified as the 'the place of introvert personalities in learner centered activities' and the related themes were 'lonely person, difficulty expressing oneself' The significance and positive effect of student centered learning methodology have been observed in most of the studies conducted in different parts of the world. As discussed in the previous categories, the learning experience participants had in the student centered education course enabled them to interact, share ideas, develop autonomy, responsibility and hence helped them improve their academic and communicative skills. Similarly, Kennedy (2009) reported that after

participation in a debate, students rating of this experience as an instructional strategy increased from %75 to about %85, including the students who were initially restrained to participate. However, the metaphors grouped in this category yielded different findings raising the issue of introvert personalities and their place in learner centered activities. These metaphors clearly indicated that these students, though very few in number, have not been able to benefit from learner centered activities since they openly reported that they could not interact with the group/class members to express their ideas due to the reason that they prefer to be alone and not to speak. More research analyzing the position and role of each individual within learner centered activities needs to be conducted to provide opportunities for such personalities to benefit from learner centered methodology in the best possible way.

#### **4.2. Conclusion**

The significance and contribution of student centered learning on the development of academic and social skills are underlined in this study as in most of the related studies. Variety and diversity of ideas enable pre-service teachers enrolled in higher education to look at issues from a wider perspective because student centered activities provide opportunities for learners to collaborate with peers of different cultural background, abilities, and learning styles. It can also be concluded from the study that student centered learning is effective due to the variety and diversity it provides in the ideas being exchanged and the strategies being developed. This is achieved through the interaction that takes place among the pre-service teachers during group work activities and whole class discussions. Interaction is an important aspect of student centered learning; hence, student centered learning methodology provides foundation for discussion, questioning, criticizing and evaluation all of which feed into the development of critical thinking and problem solving skills. It can also be concluded from the study that learner centered approach provides opportunities for development of self-regulated and autonomous learning which are essential skills that pre-service teachers have to attain for their future careers to be life-long learners. Self-regulation and autonomous learning are developed since the role of responsibility for learning is shifted from the teacher to the learners. Three most important aspects of student centered learning which are discovery learning, cooperative learning, and research-based learning enable pre-service teachers to take active roles in their own learning hence; they are not passive receivers of knowledge any more but rather they learn how to search for, analyze, synthesize and apply knowledge. The findings of this study supported this notion of student centered education since pre-service teachers have depicted themselves as active learners and their teachers as guides and facilitators in the metaphors that they have used.

#### **4.3. Implications and Suggestions for Further Research**

The study results depict that the pre-service teachers taking this student centered education course believe that they benefited from the approaches used and enjoyed themselves all throughout the course. It seems that the outcomes of this course changed the views of the pre-service teachers about the roles of the teachers and students in class; hence, if the administrator and the staff members of the faculty take this into consideration, they should try to extend this approach to other courses offered. In this way, pre-service teachers will be trained in the way that they will practice their careers.

The method used in this course is suggested to be used in other courses in the faculty that pre-service teachers take to have the views of students in a wider perspective to be able to generalize the results more effectively. Also a longitudinal study is necessary to follow students after their graduation to find out whether or not they use student centered education approach in their practice as a teacher.

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## Uzun Özet

Toplumun değişen ihtiyaçları yüksek öğretim kurumlarının yeni bilgi türleri, becerileri ve sorumlulukları geliştirmesini gerektirir. Bu da programlarda öğretmen merkezli eğitimden öğrenci merkezli

eđitime geiři gerektirmektedir. Bu kapsamda, retmen-renci rollerinde, etkinliklerin tasarımı ve uygulama yaklařımlarında deęiřikliklere ihtiya duyulmaktadır. renme eđitimciler tarafından rencinin aktif rol oynadıęı yapılandırıcı bir sre olarak kabul edilmekte ve zellikle yksek renim kurumlarında rencilerin bu srete kendi renmelerinde sorumluluk stlenmeleri gerektięini belirtmektedirler. Yaptıęı arařtırmalarda Weimer (2002), hem eđitim programlarının hem de sınıftaki eđitim retimin yksek derecede retmen merkezli olduęu ve bu durumun rencilerin renmelerini, bařarılarını ve etkileřimlerini olumsuz ynde etkiledięini saptamıřtır. Weimer'ın alıřmaları retmen merkezlilięin zellikle 5 alanda kendini gsterdięini ileri srmektedir: sınıftaki g dengeleri, ierięin fonksiyonu, retmenin rol, renme sorumluluęu ve deęerlendirme ama ve sreleri. Weimer'a gre ierik, etkinlikler, renme kořulları ve deęerlendirme kriterleri gibi hususlarda alınan kararların tamamen retmenin inisiyatifine bırakılması ve rencilerin bu konularda alınan kararlarda etkin rol alamaması rencileri gl, zgvenli ve gdlenmiř olmaktan uzak, kararsız, tedirgin ve edilgen yapmaktadır. Eđitim programlarının ierięe nem ve aęırlık vermesi, eleřtirel ve yansıtıcı dřnme, karar alma, problem zme, akran ve z deęerlendirme gibi becerilerin geliřmesine olanak saęlamamaktadır (Akbiyık & Seferoglu 2012; Candella, Dalley & Benzel-Lindley 2006; Diekelman 2002; Ironside 2004; Tanner 2004). Bu alanda yapılan bazı alıřmalar, rencinin kendi renmesinde edilgen bir dinleyici ya da bilgiyi olduęu gibi depolayan kiři olmaktan ıkıp daha aktif bir rol stlenmesi gerektięini vurgulamaktadır. retmenin ise bilginin tek kaynaęı deęil, rencilerin renmelerini destekleyen bir rehber ve yol gsterici konumunda olması gerektięini savunmaktadır.

Bu alıřma retmen adaylarının renci merkezli renme stratejisi zerindeki algılarını metaforik bir bakıř aısıyla incelemeyi hedeflemektedir. Arařtırmada nitel yaklařım kapsamında yorumlama yntemi kullanılmıřtır. Yorumlama yntemine gre, sosyal dnya, o dnyayı oluřturan bireylerin gznden ve bakıř aılarından yorumlanmalı ve anlařılmalıdır. Bu nedenle bu alıřmada retmen adaylarının renci merkezli renme stratejisi ile ilgili deneyimleri zerine olan algılarını metaforik bakıř aısıyla yansıtmasını istenmiřtir. Arařtırma verileri nitel olarak 37 retmen adayının deneyimlerini metaforik szckler kullanarak yazılı olarak ifade etmeleri aracılıęı ile toplanmıřtır. Arařtırma, Doęu Akdeniz niversitesi 2011-12 retim yılı Bahar dneminde Eđitim Fakltesi bnyesindeki farklı retmen yetiřtirme programlarından EđIT 450 renci Merkezli Eđitim dersine kayıtlı, 23 kız ve 14 erkek renci ile yrtlmřtir. Nitel veriler ierik analizi yntemiyle kategorize edilip temalara ayrılmıřtır. Veriyi oluřturan belgeler arařtırmacılar tarafından farklı zamanlarda birok kez okunup aık kodlama ve seici kodlama trleri temel alınarak kategori ve temalar oluřturulmuřtur. Mecazi grřlerin yansıttıęı mesajlar temalara ayrılıp arařtırmacılar tarafından karřılıklı saęlama teknięini kullanarak teyit edilmiřtir.

alıřma, renci merkezli renme yaklařımının iřbirlikli renimin nemine, retmen-renci rollerine, rencilerin z dzenleme becerilerine, renmedeki zerkliklerine ve etkileřimlerine dayalı veriler sunmaktadır. İřbirlikli renme ile ilgili metaforik grřler renme srecinde grup alıřmasının, iřbirlięin, renmede farklılık ve eřitlilięin nemini ve bu becerilerin geliřtięini, z dzenleme kategorisindeki metaforik grřlerden ıkan temalar ise renmede etkin rol alma, buluř yolu ile renme, yařayarak renme ve renmede sorumluluk alma becerilerinin nemini ve geliřtięini savunmaktadır. retmen-renci rolleri ile ilgili kategoride ise renci merkezli renme yaklařımı uygulaması sonucunda, retmenin rehber ve destekleyici roller, rencilerin ise uygulayıcı, analizci, retici ve yaratıcı roller stendięini vurgulamıřtır. renci merkezli eđitim yaklařımının etkileřime ve yaratıcılıęa dayalı kategorisinde ise sayęı erevesinde fikirlerin paylařılması, eřitlilik, rencilerin ilgi ve seenekleri ve bireysel renme sorumluluęunun renmedeki olumlu etkileri ortaya ıkmıřtır. Son kategoride ise renci merkezli renme yaklařımına dayalı etkinliklerde, ie dnk kiřilięe sahip rencilerin grup alıřmaları sırasında karřılařtıkları glkler ortaya konulmuřtur.

renci merkezli renme yaklařımının bir stratejisi olan iřbirlięine dayalı renmenin bu alıřmanın bulgularına paralel bulgular gsterdięi sylenebilir. İřbirlięine dayalı yaklařımın grup yelerine olumlu baęımlılık, bireysel sorumluluk, grup yelerine yardım sorumluluęu, farklılık ve eřitlilik saęlayarak st dzey dřnme becerilerini, sosyal ve renme becerilerini geliřtirdięi farklı alıřmalar tarafından da desteklenmektedir (Bell 2010; Kohonen 1992; McCombs & Whisler 1997; Singh 2011). Bu alıřmada ortaya ıkan z dzenleme ve renmede zerk olma becerilerinin renci merkezli yaklařım tarafından geliřtirildięi grř bu alanda yapılan dięer alıřmaların bulgularıyla da desteklenmektedir (Broady & Kenning 1996; Simao & Flores 2010; Weatherholtz 2003; Weimer 2002). renci merkezli renme yaklařımının nerdięi retmen ve renci rollerindeki deęiřim dięer alıřmaların (Weimer 2002) destekledięi gibi bu alıřmada da yer almıřtır. Uygulanan sınıf ii etkinliklerde, retmenin daha edilgen

öğrencilerin ise daha aktif roller üstlendiği ve bu rol değişiminin ise onların bilgiyi inşa etme becerilerini geliştirdiği görüşü ileri sürülmüştür. Bu çalışmada, öğrenci merkezli öğrenme yaklaşımının sınıftaki interaktif iletişimi artırdığı, bu durumun ise fikirlerin serbestçe ve saygı çerçevesinde paylaşımına olanak sağladığı görüşü ortaya çıkmıştır. Bu durumun ise fikirlerde, stratejilerde ve çıkan ürünlerde çeşitlilik ve farklılığa sebep olduğu, bunun da yaratıcılıklarını artırdığı görüşü ileri sürülmüştür. Bu bulgular ise bazı araştırmaların bulguları (Law 2007; Liang 2007; Simao & Flores 2010) ile desteklenmektedir. Yapılan bu araştırmada, içe dönük kişiliğe sahip öğrencilerin öğrenci merkezli öğrenme yaklaşımı uygulanırken kendilerini ifade etmede zorlandıkları ve kendilerini yalnız hissettikleri de saptanmıştır.

Bu çalışmada, öğrenci merkezli öğrenme yaklaşımının akademik ve sosyal becerilerin gelişiminde önemli ve katkı sağlayıcı bir yaklaşım olduğu ortaya çıkmıştır. Bu yaklaşımın öğretmen adaylarının fikirlerinde ve stratejilerinde çeşitlilik ve farklılığı artırdığı, onlara olaylara daha geniş bir açıdan bakma fırsatı yarattığı ortaya çıkmıştır. Bu çeşitlilik ve farklılığın, öğrenci merkezli öğrenme yaklaşımının işbirlikli öğrenme yaklaşımına verdiği önemden kaynaklandığı görüşünü de ortaya koymaktadır. Öğrenci merkezli öğrenme yaklaşımının sınıftaki interaktif iletişimi de artırdığı ve bu durumun da öğretmen adaylarının sorgulama, eleştirel ve yansıtıcı düşünme becerilerine katkı koyduğu görüşü ortaya çıkmıştır. Bu yaklaşımın öğrencilerin öz düzenleme ve özerk olma becerilerini de artırdığı ileri sürülmüştür. Bu veriler ışığında, fakülte yönetiminin bu yaklaşımı diğer derslerde de uygulamaya koymas ve öğretmen adaylarını gelecekteki mesleklerini icra edecekleri şekilde yetiştirilmelerine olanak sağlamalıdır. Bu yaklaşımın fakültedeki diğer derslerde de uygulanıp daha geniş bir örneklem üzerinden verilerin toplanması, sonuçları daha geniş kitlelere genelleme yapmaya olanak sağlayabilir. Öğretmen adaylarının mezun olduktan sonra bu yaklaşımı mesleklerinde uygulayıp uygulamadıkları da boylamsal çalışma aracılığı ile tespit edilebilir.

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