

Preservice Elementary Teachers' Perspectives on the Peer Assessment Process During an Academic Poster Session

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ABSTRACT

The use of peer assessment activities is increasing; however, students might not always be willing or feel comfortable to implement these activities. The main goal of this qualitative study was the exploration of preservice elementary teachers' perspectives around the implementation of peer assessment process during an academic poster session. For this purpose, a questionnaire consisting of open-ended questions, semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions were utilized for data gathering purposes with 87 preservice elementary teachers in Turkey. The preservice elementary teachers' concerns regarding their peers' reactions, symbiotic agreements and any previous personal relationships between the participants were the main factors that led to their subjectivity while evaluating their peers. They defined instructors as more experienced and objective and expressed their trust towards teacher rating. The preservice elementary teachers' performance during the peer assessment process, and their perspective towards subjectivity highlighted the risk of using peer assessment process as a summative assessment tool.

Keywords: Peer assessment, poster session, subjectivity, anonymity.

Sınıf Öğretmeni Adaylarının Akademik Poster Sunumu Sırasındaki Akran Değerlendirme Sürecine Yönelik Görüşleri

ÖZ

Akran değerlendirme uygulamalarının yükseköğretimdeki kullanımı gün geçtikçe artmakta olmasına rağmen; öğretmen adayları bu uygulamalar sırasında kendilerini rahat hissetmeyebilir ve bu etkinliklere katılmakta isteksizlik gösterebilir. Bu nitel araştırmanın temel amacı, sınıf öğretmeni adaylarının akran değerlendirme sürecine yönelik görüşlerinin incelenmesidir. Bu amaç doğrultusunda, açık uçlu sorularla hazırlanmış anketler ve yarı yapılandırılmış bireysel ve odak grup görüşmeleri kullanılarak toplamda Türkiye'de bir üniversitede eğitim gören 87 sınıf öğretmeni adayından veri toplanmıştır. Sınıf öğretmeni adaylarının akranlarının tepkilerine ve çıkara dayalı kişisel ilişkilerine yönelik endişeleri, akranlarını değerlendirirken subjektif kararlar verilmelerine yol açan temel faktörler olarak dikkat çekmektedir. Buna ek olarak, sınıf öğretmeni adaylarının dersin öğretmenlerini daha deneyimli ve objektif olarak tanımladıkları ve öğretmen değerlendirmesine duydukları güveni dile getirdikleri görülmüştür. Sınıf öğretmeni adaylarının akran değerlendirme sürecindeki performansları ve subjektif bakış açıları, akran değerlendirmesinin düzey belirleyici bir değerlendirme aracı olarak kullanılmasının riskini vurgulamaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Akran değerlendirmesi, poster sunumu, subjektivite, anonimlik.

Introduction

Traditional higher education assessment practices such as testing, grading and examinations (Heywood, 2000) have been frequently criticized for being incompatible with the institutional need to prepare preservice teachers to enter a competitive and demanding professional environment. Traditional assessment activities are generally defined around two important educational goals: while summative assessment activities are specifically designed to determine levels of learner educational attainment for any predetermined educational goal, formative assessment activities help educators to measure learner performance in order that educators can adjust teaching content, methodologies, and expectations accordingly. Boud and Falchikov (2006) questioned the traditional concept of summative and formative assessment methods within higher education, suggesting a reformed perspective of assessment that focuses on the long-term learning and performance of the individual rather than focusing only upon immediate learning goals. Alternative assessment methods have been promoted

not only as tools to measure higher education students' performance in any given subject, but also as ways of preparing them to successfully use the skills they have acquired after they graduate (Thomas, Martin and Pleasants, 2011).

Assessment methods are an integral part of the teaching process, since they help educators to explore students' prior knowledge and help them to determine current student performance on any given subject (Struyven, Dochy and Janssens, 2005). Educators working with alternative assessment methods have frequently chosen to focus on peer assessment, since it allows for the flexible implementation of a vast array of different activities to develop the skills of students (Alzaid, 2017). Utilization of peer assessment activities not only places the individual at the center of the learning process and creates opportunities for them to utilize their knowledge, but also helps them to apply these experiences into real-life situations (Hamodi, López-Pastor and López-Pastor, 2017). In other words, peer assessment could be one of the ways to enhance traditional assessment processes by providing opportunities for students to experience and implement various skills such as presentation, investigation and/or evaluation of an educational product or process, and the deliberation of findings. In addition to the potential benefits of peer assessment on students' academic performance and a significant effect on their practices and learning preferences (Boud, 2007), implementations of peer assessment activities in the higher education setting are also likely to increase (Topping, 2017).

Peer assessment is a flexible method that can be effectively utilized formatively or summatively, while helping the individual to transfer desired skills and knowledge to real-life situations. It can be defined as an educational process that evolves around measurement and the creation of knowledge through individuals' collective work. It provides opportunities for learners to judge their peers' work via mostly teacher-designed assessment tools. Topping (2017) suggested that the implementation of peer assessment methodologies leads assessors to reactively cope with the demands of peer assessment and to spend more time on desired learning tasks by performing various cognitive abilities such as reviewing, comparing, or providing feedback. It also supports assessees, since it provides a guideline that identifies the essential elements of desired educational work, helps learners to compare their work with their peers, and offers students increased and timely feedback (Topping, 2017).

It is clear that implementation of assessment processes could affect the reliability of peer ratings and educators could take some precautions against this. For instance, Sadler and Good (2006) suggested taking steps to decrease the emotional burden of the peer assessment process on assessors, and how that might increase the accuracy of peer ratings. In another example, Falchikov and Goldfinch (2000) suggested increasing the association between peer and faculty ratings through small numbers of groups, focusing on the academic settings and peer assessment activities, development of easily understandable criteria, inclusion of assessors in the development of such criteria, the creation of better study designs, and clarity in implementation processes.

There is a large body of literature that links peer assessment with positive learning outcomes, especially when implemented using effective learning activities. For instance, Sun, Harris, Walther, and Baiocchi (2015) noted persistent positive effects of peer assessment on student quizzes and final exam notes, while Segers and Dochy (2001) advocated peer assessment as a method that enables students to think critically. It could also increase student confidence and understanding of desired learning topics (Pope, 2001). Nicol, Thomson, and Breslin (2014) echoed this notion by suggesting how the peer assessment process engages students in the evaluation process and steers them towards providing feedback, which in return helps students to transfer their acquired knowledge to their own work. As Li and Gao (2016) suggested, the positive effects of peer assessment on student performance can be more prominent for low and average performing students, since peer assessment as a process requires active learning and social interaction and can thereby help enhance students' communication skills. It also should not be forgotten that, as one teacher expressed in Topping's (2010) study, although the implementation of an effective peer assessment process might require significant preparation time, it could help instructors by reducing time spent on assessment activities in the long run.

Although peer assessment can be used as an effective learning and evaluation tool, certain limitations of the peer assessment process should also be mentioned. For example, Topping (2010) highlighted the constraints of only grading during the peer assessment process, noting the importance of providing non-directive feedback that can more likely be accepted by those being assessed. Harris, Brown, and Dargusch (2018) also raised concerns regarding the effects of students' potentially cheating during the peer assessment process, through academic dishonesty, purposeful underperformance and strategic prioritization. Ryan, Marshall, Porter and Jia (2007) confirmed that learners perceive peer assessment as an unfair process, with many learners concerned about either the subjectivity or ability of their peers to perform a fair assessment, which in return can lead to students developing a negative perspective of the peer assessment process. Overall, the perceived limitations of the peer assessment process can be summarized as: reliability of peer rating, perceived expertise of assessors and assessees, issues regarding power relations between assessor and assessees, and the somewhat extensive time requirements of the peer assessment process (Liu and Carless, 2006).

Assessment can be a significant burden for educators (Badea and Popescu, 2019), since the number of courses they deliver and the students they teach are generally seen to be increasing. Implementation of well-designed peer assessment practices might provide an opportunity to decrease the educator workload. Both the educational and application-oriented benefits of peer assessment are seen to motivate educators to implement these methodologies more frequently within their course programs. Kollar and Fischer (2010) emphasized the importance of creating studies that explore alternative assessment methods, as well as their connection to collaborative learning activities within higher education. Smith, Cooper, and Lancaster (2002) highlighted the limited research on the implementation of peer assessment practices via poster sessions. Thus, the researcher of the current study aimed to explore preservice elementary school teachers' perspectives of the peer assessment process during an academic poster presentation session.

Method

The researcher of the current study had previously attempted to implement peer assessment process for a course in which there was insufficient time to properly assess in excess of 100 poster presentations in the available time of three hours. However, whilst discussing the syllabus of the course with the students, many rigorously opposed the implementation of peer assessment. The sudden and demanding opposition of the students to the implementation of peer assessment in this case and the increasing popularity of student-centered learning and product-centered assessment methods (Medland, 2016) led to the design of the current research on preservice elementary teachers' perspective regarding the peer assessment process. With similar perspectives in mind, the researcher of this qualitative study employed a phenomenological research approach in order to explore and describe the experiences of preservice elementary school teachers on the implementation of peer assessment during an academic poster session.

Working Group

For the purpose of this study, participants were selected as volunteers, chosen via criterion sampling method from applicants to a university course specifically adjusted for the implementation of peer assessment during an academic poster presentation session. From the 106 preservice elementary teachers who had enrolled in and completed the course, 58 answered a questionnaire consisting of open-ended questions. Additionally, 12 students agreed to participate in semi-structured interviews, whilst 17 agreed to join small focus group discussions of four or five people.

Implementation Process of Poster Session

The college-level course attended by the participants aimed to provide general information about the childhood education process. The themes of the posters presented in the course were selected

from 10 main course topics such as primary educational approaches on early childhood education, implementation of educational games in early childhood programs, and the transition from early childhood to elementary school programs. Microsoft PowerPoint or Publisher programs were used to create 50 cm by 70 cm academic posters that featured a clear title section, an abstract or introduction, photographs, diagrams, graphics, and/or tables, bullet-pointed text boxes, as well as a conclusion and references.

The instructor acquired the necessary authorization from the educational faculty board to implement a poster session within the School of Educations' courtyard. Members of the Educational Faculty and preservice teachers were invited to the academic poster session via poster advertisements and through e-mail. Preservice elementary teachers who took the course were divided equally into three groups for the effective presentation and evaluation of the academic posters. While the preservice elementary teachers in the first group presented their academic posters over a period of one hour, the other preservice elementary teachers listened to the presentations and evaluated those preassigned specifically to them. The process was then repeated twice so as to include each group as presenters. During this process, each of the preservice elementary teachers presented their academic work for a period of one hour, evaluated two individuals' academic poster presentations, and listened to some of their peers' academic poster presentations.

All of the preservice elementary teachers who participated in the course were provided training on the peer evaluation process. For the purpose of creating an effective peer evaluation process, the instructor created a poster evaluation form that consisted of 10 criteria in which the preservice teachers were graded from 1 to 10. The 10-point evaluation criteria concerned issues such as whether or not the research problems of the presentations were clearly defined, and whether or not the visuals used helped to increase the quality of the posters being presented. The evaluation criteria were systematically explored and discussed with each of the preservice elementary teachers in order to clarify the necessary features of an effective academic poster and its presentation. Based on this perspective, the preservice elementary teachers each prepared academic poster.

The preservice teachers also received 30 minutes of training on how to use Microsoft PowerPoint and Publisher to create their academic posters. They used this introductory training to create initial drafts of their academic poster, and then met with the instructor in order to discuss how to refine their work. One week prior to the poster presentation session, the instructor created a small-group (four or five students per group) training activity in which one student presented their draft poster, while their peers applied the 10-point evaluation criteria, both to enhance their understanding of the criteria and to gain experience in the peer evaluation process. The process was repeated until each of the students had received the opportunity to present their academic poster and to evaluate their peers' work. This provided opportunities for the preservice elementary teachers to gain experience and also to receive feedback on their own academic posters, as well as the manner in which they implemented the peer assessment criteria.

Data Collection and Analysis

A college level course was specifically adapted for the purposes of data collection in this study. 13 weeks of the course were designed around lectures, group discussions, collaborative learning activities, while in the 14th week an academic poster session was organized on various topics regarding elementary-school education. During the final week of the semester, each of the students presented academic posters to the instructors and other preservice teachers of an educational institution. In order to succeed in the course, the students were required to score a minimum of 60 out of 100 points. Whilst scoring the students course grades, 40% was allocated to their midterm exam results, 30% for their final exam results, and 30% for their poster presentation. The peer assessment process was implemented during the poster session since it provided a unique opportunity to evaluate the performance of over 100 preservice elementary teachers during the three-hour academic poster session.

Although each of the preservice teachers were required to take this mandatory course, the students were clearly informed that participation in the current study was voluntary, and that their participation or nonparticipation would not affect their grade in any way. All of the data was collected at the end of the semester. Immediately following the academic poster session and the peer assessment process, the study's participants were requested to complete a questionnaire consisting open-ended questions. The questionnaire sought to investigate the preservice teachers' immediate experience of the peer assessment process they had participated in, while semi-structured and focus-group interviews sought to record their general opinions about peer assessment process. Prior to the implemented peer assessment, the instructor offered the participants, either singularly or in small groups, the choice of appointment date for their interviews. All of the semi-structure interviews and small group discussions were implemented following completion of the peer assessment implementation. The interview conversations were audio-recorded using two smartphones, and the audio data were subsequently transcribed verbatim.

For the purposes of this research, the triangulation method was selected and implemented (Creswell, 2013; Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2016), and the data collection methods were diversified since the data were collected through open-ended questionnaire, semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions. This qualitative research was prepared based on Corbin and Strauss's (1990) suggestions towards designing a trustworthy research. Open coding practices were employed and, as a pilot analytical exercise, 15% of the open-ended questionnaire data were analyzed. The pilot analysis results revealed data themes such as self-awareness of subjectivity, reluctance to participate in peer assessment activities, and negative perspectives of the peer assessment process. These results were then taken note of and utilized during the creation of the questionnaire codebook.

Since data collection and analysis are mutually dependent processes, the semi-structured interview and focus group questions were adjusted according to the questionnaire codebook. For example, in the open-ended questionnaire some of the preservice teachers expressed their concerns about the assessors' fairness; thus, a question about the fairness of the peer assessment process was included in the semi-structured and focus group interviews. Later, 10% of the whole data were analyzed using the questionnaire codebook in order to create the final version peer assessment codebook which was then used to analyze the entire data. The final version of the peer assessment codebook was constructed based on the main code themes identified: self-awareness of preservice teachers, distrust of preservice teachers toward their peers, and perspectives of preservice teachers on peer assessment process.

Qualitative data analysis is not a stagnant process, since some codes could lose their merit whilst some others could later emerge. Thus, qualitative data analysis of the current study's data followed Lincoln and Guba's (1985) data analysis method in utilizing four steps: (i) *filling in*—inclusion of new codes to codebooks to complete missing elements in coding schemes; (ii) *extension*—exploration of existing codes or code schemes for establishing emerging concepts; (iii) *bridging*—determination of formerly unrecognized relationships between codes and code schemes; and (iv) *surfacing*—generation of new code schemes for formerly unrecognized concepts.

Research Ethic

The ethical permission of this study was obtained from Kırşehir Ahi Evran University Social and Human Sciences Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Committee with the protocol number 2020/05 dated 25/12/2020.

Results

The main purpose of this study was to determine preservice elementary teachers' perspectives on the peer assessment process during an academic poster session. It was clear that the preservice elementary teachers who participated in the study were struggling to objectively assess their peers. Also, they repeatedly expressed their concerns regarding their peers' objectivity and/or ability to

effectively evaluate their work. Instead, the preservice elementary teachers chose to demonstrate their trust to the process of teacher scoring rather than internalizing the peer assessment process. Qualitative findings of this study summarized via a concept map at Figure 1.

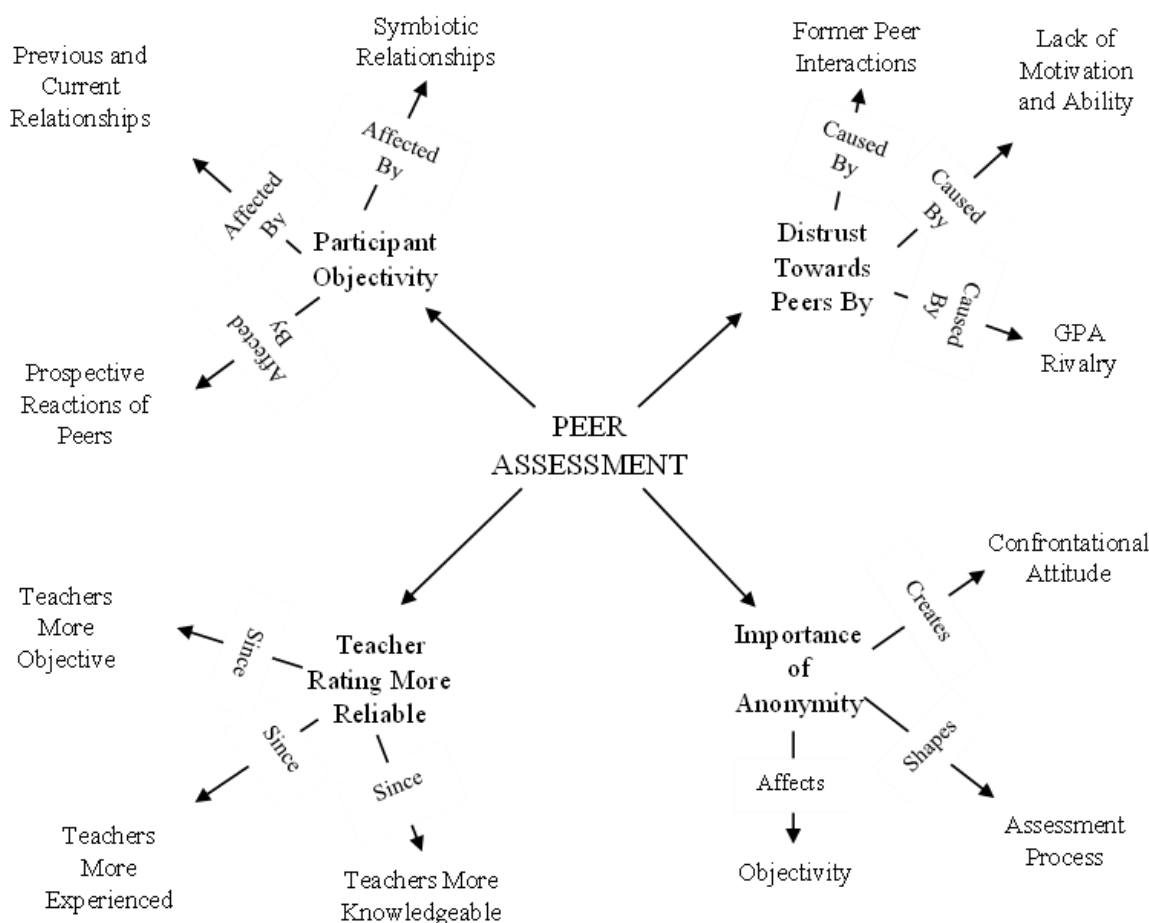


Figure 1. Concept Map of the Emerging Qualitative Concepts

Participants Not Objective During Peer Assessment

Almost all of the participant preservice elementary teachers admitted the inability to evaluate their peers objectively. While some indicated how their previous personal relationship with their peers affected their decision-making process, others highlighted the pressure they experienced both prior to and during the peer assessment process. They also described how their previous symbiotic relationships regarding the acquisition of high scores could affect their current peer assessment process.

How symbiotic relationship between preservice teachers effected subjectivity

The preservice teachers in this study highlighted how the potential gain of a high score could lead them to build symbiotic relationships during the peer assessment process. In the following anecdote, Melissa exemplifies how preservice elementary teachers' cautionary actions led them to provide subjective feedback during one of their courses:

Melissa: This happened to me too. The teacher did it like this [implementing peer assessment process] in our drama course. When he told us to evaluate our friends, those that had completed

their assignments commented like “this was good” or “this was bad”, but others, for example, wouldn’t express their thoughts since it was going to be their turn soon. They immediately responded by only being positive, saying to the teacher that it’s good, it’s like this and that. This happened because they also wanted to receive positive comments in return. Objectivity would go out the window. In my experience, objectivity is not possible in peer assessment.

In another example, Mary speculated how this symbiotic relationship between students could work during peer assessment of an academic poster session:

Mary: Let’s say that Max checks Linda’s poster during the peer evaluation, and I get Max’s. We could make a deal between us: I could say to Max, “I get your close friend’s poster and give her a high score; and you get mine so you do the same”. So we pass this together and be done with it.

Interestingly, another preservice elementary teacher introduced this symbiotic relationship as a way to ensure conducting a smooth, albeit tainted/biased peer assessment process:

Instructor: What do you think can happen during the peer evaluation process?

Jack: I don’t think there’ll be a problem because everyone will be worrying about the grades and they’ll try not to create many problems. Maybe everyone can help each other. It could be a bit more like “I give to you; you give back to me”.

How previous and current relationships between preservice teachers effected subjectivity

The preservice elementary teachers’ previous interactions and current relationships with their peers also had a prominent effect on their decision-making process during peer assessment. In the following example, Mike explains how the well-established cliques formed over the previous three years could positively or negatively affect the peer assessment process:

Mike: I don’t think neutrality’s possible. Because, as you must have noticed, there are particular groups within the class. So I’m sure that while grading, you’ll see certain things between them happen such as scores increased in some places and decreased in others. Even if there is no name recorded, it’ll be obvious who graded who within the class. I think this is a problem; no one will remain neutral because they experienced three years of university life together. Some now see each other like brothers, some are friends, whilst some see each other as enemies.

In another example, Robert shows his distrust of the peer assessment process by describing how he would subjectively give high scores for his friends, whilst giving low scores for other classmates:

Robert: We’ve been here for three years now. To be honest, people know each other now. If there are grades in this, people won’t trust each other. I wouldn’t trust myself either. I would favor my close friends, if I’m honest. There are people I know, Josh for example. If I was to be unfair to friends I don’t like, my score [the score he gives] would be lower. So I believe it will be better if people could be neutral to each other.

Instructor: You said that it would be better if people were neutral, but that you’d give friends extra points if it’s someone you like. Why?

Robert: Because he is a friend I know and like. Nick is my housemate, so I have to give him a higher score too. It could be bad if I didn’t as I think he would do the same too. This is it, to be honest. No need to quibble.

During their three previous years of university education together, the preservice elementary teachers frequently interacted with their peers, and therefore certain positive and negative emotions developed over time that then seeped through to their decision making. Mike stated how his emotions could steer him to manipulate his decisions and lead him to adjust the scores he would give to certain individuals:

Jack: I'll give a girl as an example. When I see that girl, everything becomes negative – it is impossible for me to be positive around her. I am sure I would give her a “2” when she probably deserves “3 out of 5”. So she suffers. That's how I would hurt her. Likewise, in no way I would give William [his close friend] “3 out of 5”, I would probably bump that score up to a “4”. But it's different for someone I don't know. If I see someone for the first time, for example, I would grade them normally, but if they are my friend, I know I would give them extra.

How prospective reactions of preservice teachers effected their subjectivity

The preservice elementary teachers' concerns regarding their peers' reactions also affected the way they conducted the peer assessment process. Similar to many of the preservice teachers' expressed concerns, in the following anecdote, Paul expresses his thoughts regarding peer reactions and acknowledges his subjectivity:

Paul: He may react and ask why I didn't give him more [points]. He can't do much, but he may say things, like why did you do this as we eat and drink together. He can be like, “Did I deserve this?” I wouldn't mind much, but I would most probably give a high score anyway.

Concerns that the preservice elementary teachers expressed about their peers' reaction are understandable since some also questioned their peers' judgment with regards to their own work. When the preservice elementary teachers were asked about problems they encountered during the peer assessment process, Kevin responded with following statement:

Kevin: While reviewing my friend's work, I tried to remain objective and gave him a decent score. However, when he saw the score, he thought it was low. When I checked other people's scores, I realized that everyone was giving high scores. So in order to not feel any remorse, I increased his score accordingly.

In another example, Karen exemplifies how a preservice elementary teacher's plea regarding his work made her feel uncomfortable during the peer evaluation process, and expressed the following; ‘I felt a bit under pressure, since the person I rated told me “I put so much effort into this, please don't give me a low score”’. In the following example, Eric describes how another student tried to pressure him by exerting her friend's evaluation on Eric's performance in order to manipulate her peer assessment score; ‘I encountered an issue that effected my objectivity. After I finished grading, the person I evaluated confronted me and said, “Why did you give me such a low score; even though my classmate didn't give you one?”’

Participants Worried About Peers' Skills and Objectivity

One of the most potent factors that led preservice elementary teachers to oppose peer assessment process were their concerns regarding their peers' ability to conduct a proper assessment. The preservice elementary teachers explained how their former social interactions with their peers could negatively affect objectivity during the assessment process. Overall, the preservice elementary teachers in the current study repeatedly questioned their peers' ability or motivation to effectively evaluate their work. Throughout their college career, the preservice teachers took many courses together and any previous negative interactions with their peers negatively impacted on their own perspective of their peers' intentions, thereby creating a sense of anxiety towards the peer assessment process. For instance, Kelly described how her prior social relationships with her former classmates forced her to switch classes and highlighted her distrust towards her peers:

Kelly: I don't think everyone's going to be fair. I don't trust their grading. I came here, for example, from the other class. I know the ambiance in there [the other class] and how'll they behave. They'll see this personally and evaluate it subjectively.

David echoed Kelly's concerns and revealed his unease about his former classmates' actions during the peer assessment process:

David: I came here from the other class. Ofcourse there was a personal reason for this change. There is a possibility that others were offended, so they may grade me accordingly.

Similarly, Tamara explains how her friends' former negative social relationships with her classmates led her to developing distrust towards her peers:

Tamara: I took one or two lessons with them [the other class]. They were only after getting good grades. They don't value friendship. Their friendships mostly revolve around personal gain. There was an argument, a fight between girls, and that's how Kelly came here. And so, if something like this happens [implementation of peer assessment process], surely Rebecca's grade would be very low. I care about her. She left there after many incidents, but just because of this they will grade her badly.

Apparently, concerns of the preservice elementary teachers as to the effects of personal relationships on the assessment process are well founded. Amy described her drama-filled experience during the peer assessment process:

Amy: While I was presenting my poster, the girlfriend of the person who was evaluating me came and took him away. I couldn't even finish presenting my poster. I am not sure whether that girl will have affected my grade or not.

The preservice elementary teachers also highlighted their peers' lack of ability or motivation to conduct an affective peer assessment process. Although there were pre-established and practiced assessment criteria for the peer assessment process, it was clear that some of the preservice elementary teachers chose not to follow them. During the interviews, Diane revealed her frustration about her peer's skills to appropriately apply the assessment criteria; 'I was expecting an objective evaluation process, but the person who evaluated me gave me a low score because she did not like my clothes [there was no assessment criteria regarding presenters' attire]'. Melissa highlighted how some of the preservice elementary teachers might not take the assessment process seriously, which in turn creates further problems. She advocates for the handpicking of trusted assessors between the preservice elementary teachers:

Melissa: People don't care about each other's work. Maybe a small portion cares, and so we need those people to be evaluators. If we select randomly, a poor evaluator might come and create trouble. But if it's not random and, according to your observations, like this [the peer assessment process], then it is possible.

Participants Defined Teacher Rating as More Reliable

The preservice elementary teachers that agreed to participate in this study were not comfortable with their instructors' decision to leave the assessment process of the academic poster project completely to their peers. They questioned their own ability to effectively evaluate an academic poster and instead expressed their trust in teacher rating since they perceived their instructor to be more objective and/or experienced. When they were asked about potential problems that could arise during the peer assessment process, Jimmy mentioned his limited content knowledge of the assessed topic:

Jimmy: First I need to know about the paper I am going to grade. Before I criticize my friends knowledge, I need to have enough knowledge about that subject myself. This is not the case with peer evaluation. It's something like I know almost as much as he knows... What if someone wrote something wrong, but we then took it as being correct. We directly accept what's written there. Since there are a significant number of subjects, we don't have the opportunity to check them all during the peer assessment process.

When the preservice elementary teachers were asked open-ended questions about the reliability of the scores they acquired during peer assessment, Olivia responded with the following

statement that addressed some of the preservice elementary teachers' concerns regarding their ability to effectively evaluate their peers:

Olivia: In my opinion, the score I took from peer assessment was more than what I should have received. Although the content of my poster was very good, I had trouble presenting it and had not sufficiently answered some of the questions.

Tamara also stated her doubts on her ability to effectively evaluate her peers' work and identified teacher rating as being a more reliable method:

Tamara: For example, my subject is inclusion. Surely you have read better resources than mine on this subject. I read articles from different people. I may have a suspicion about the quality of a paragraph, but how right is it for me to award a high grade or a low grade? I may hesitate there. Content is also important for me. Maybe he took the content from a legitimate source or maybe just copy/pasted from Google. Also, if he took from other people who are reputable, such as from professors, I won't be able to even differentiate that, but you [the instructor] could look of course. I believe you [the instructor] could notice sentences of abnormally high quality [for preservice teachers] written on this subject.

During the focus group discussions, Emily highlighted her trust in the instructor's knowledge with the following statement: 'Teacher rating should be more objective, I think. They at least have more knowledge about the topic'. Paul echoed this notion by suggesting; 'In my opinion, teachers can adjust their distance and treat everybody equally. But since we know some of the other students, we might award higher grades'. Brian emphasized the importance of the teacher experience and identified teacher scoring as a trustworthy factor:

Brian: I think you [the instructor] should evaluate... as you have the experience. We can miss some of the premises [the evaluation criteria] in the form. But you know better, so you can grade better. You evaluating our performance will result in a more objective assessment since you have to approach everyone equally. This gives us a level of assurance.

During the semi-structured interviews, Aria also indicated her trust towards teacher rating by proposing an evaluation system that strictly controls and/or regulates peer rating:

Instructor: Okay, how should peer evaluation be applied to reduce your worries about this process?

Aria: Hmm... as an example, if you didn't leave the direct grading to them [peers] and did it yourself [the instructor]. If you evaluated the results they gave with our activity and spoke about it yourself or determined the end result yourself, it wouldn't be like this.

Participants Highlighted Anonymity

Since the peer assessment process was conducted during an academic poster session, ensuring anonymity of the individuals was obviously problematic. Although there were precautions taken to ensure anonymity of the assessor, many of the assesseees were still able to identify their assessor. Also, all of the assessors had to know the identity of the people they assessed since communication was a prerequisite practice for the academic poster sessions. Implementation of the peer assessment process led to some preservice elementary teachers reemphasizing the importance of anonymity. For instance, while answering open-ended questions, Zoey expressed how her decision making was affected by the assesseees: 'During the peer review process, we couldn't give low scores and make carefree decisions, since the person we reviewed displayed a confrontational attitude'. Randy also highlighted the idea of anonymity: 'In my opinion, the identity of assessors shouldn't be known, since the evaluation process is shaped by them'. In the following example, Dale proposed anonymity as a way to increase the objectivity of the assessment process:

Dale: I think it has to do with the person. If he likes me, he will give me a higher grade; but if he doesn't, then he will give me a lower grade. As I said, it would be more objective if there was no name, but we are not doing it that way.

Discussion

Although the goal of the current study never intended to explore the reliability or validity of peer assessment, it should not be forgotten that the preservice elementary teachers chose to evaluate their peers subjectively; even explicitly describing their reasoning behind these subjective decisions. When one considers the participants' reservations with regards to the skills and subjectivity of their peers during the peer assessment process, the participants' lack of motivation to participate in the peer assessment process becomes very clear. The preservice elementary teachers in the current study displayed negative attitudes towards the implementation of peer assessment, since they felt a level of discomfort when acting as both assessors and the ones being assessed. The robust resistance and skepticism of the preservice elementary teachers in this study displayed towards peer assessment should encourage further exploration of the effects of these negative emotions on participants' academic success during the peer assessment process.

Similar to Brindley and Scoffield (1998), suggestions on undergraduate students' negative perspectives regarding peer assessment and their doubts about peer bias and subjectivity, the preservice elementary teachers in the current study highlighted the issue of subjectivity. They did not hold much faith in their peers' abilities and motivations to objectively assess their academic performance, while they consciously expressed their own inability to objectively assess their peers' work. It is important to highlight that the preservice elementary teachers who participated in this study were grouped as three different classes when they enrolled educational institution. There were three separate classes in the school, but these classes received 80% of their classes together, so the preservice elementary school teachers spent most of their time with the same classmates. This situation led many of the preservice elementary teachers in this study to build close and, in many ways, complex relationships with their classmates that clearly affected their decision-making process by steering them to take cautionary, pragmatic, and/or emotional decisions which in turn led to their subjectivity. Overall, the concerns of the preservice teachers on their peers' reactions (Falchikov and Goldfinch, 2000), the symbiotic relationships around acquiring good grades (Magin, 2001), and the pre-established negative and positive personal relationships between preservice teachers (Carvalho, 2013; Ryan et al., 2007) were the three main reasons that led them to subjectively grade their peers during peer assessment. The school culture and relationships between the peers were found to affect the preservice elementary teachers' decision-making processes; thus, there is a need for further studies to explore how lack of anonymity can affect the peer assessment process.

As Falchikov and Goldfinch (2000) noted, the involvement of students in the assessment processes has increased globally, and there is a significant body of research that presents peer rating as being at least comparable to teacher rating (Sun et al., 2015). McGarr and Clifford (2013) suggested that although a significant amount of research explores the validity and reliability of peer assessment processes, there has been only a limited number of studies focused on how the power relationship between students and their teacher and cultural norms of the educational environment affect the peer assessment process. Although Struyven, Dochy, and Janssens (2005) noted that students perceive the peer assessment process to be fairer and more stimulating than some traditional assessment methods, the preservice elementary teachers in the current study clearly stated that they did not have much faith in their peers' ability or intention to properly and objectively assess their work. Participants of this study echoed Sadler and Good's (2006) cautions regarding the importance of an authority overseeing the peer assessment process, while expressing their own trust of teacher grading since they perceived teachers as being objective, and repeatedly requested peer assessment processes that at least partly involved teacher grading. The participants' cautionary reactions towards peer assessment in the current research highlighted Watkins, Dahlin, and Ekholm's (2005) notions regarding teacher hesitation to employ alternative approaches until the effectiveness of such methods were fully explored. Grades that the preservice elementary teachers acquired were affected by mostly subjective

peer assessments, which is a reminder of both Boud and Falchikov's (2007) caution regarding teaching institutional willingness on shifting towards alternative assessment methods, and Vu and Dall'Alba's (2007) warning regarding the ethical issues associated with the peer assessment process. When it is considered how GPA affects students' educational life and career choices, it becomes clear that instructors should exercise caution when implementing peer assessment as a summative assessment tool if they do not want to risk jeopardizing their students' future.

Since the poster presentation process in the current study required individuals to deliver information by way of oral presentation, it was not possible to hide the identity of the presenters (assessees), while certain precautions were able to be taken to keep the identities of their assessors anonymous. However, some of the preservice elementary teachers were able to discover the identity of their assessors by utilizing their personal connections within the school community, or simply by observing and analyzing the individuals' actions and questions. As Freeman and McKenzie (2002) suggested, the revelation of assessor identities can increase the anxiety of the assessed individuals, and thereby affect the fairness of the assessment process, and this encouraged some of the participants to highlight the importance of anonymity. Participants of the current study echoed the studies in the literature by suggesting how anonymous peer assessment for both the assessed and their assessors could help to control objectivity in peer assessment by reducing personal bias and favoritism towards their peers (Ashenafi, 2017). When it is considered how capable some of the preservice elementary teachers were in identifying their assessors, it becomes imperative to take all necessary precautions to protect the anonymity of both the assesseees and assessors in order to assure the objectivity of the peer assessment process, and a less stressful experience for all concerned.

Almost two decades ago, Bostock (2000) highlighted the increasing discrepancy between instructor/student ratios and cautioned that implementing better educational activities may not only require more time, but can also result in a loss of effectiveness due to increased staff workload. More recent studies have attempted to solve this problem by developing more reliable web-based peer assessment processes which also decrease the workloads of both instructors and students (Badea & Popescu, 2019). It was clear that most of the pre-service elementary teachers who participated in this study struggled to objectively assess their peers' work. Additionally, they did not trust their peers' ability to adequately and objectively assess academic poster presentations. Future studies that plan to create digitalized peer assessment processes could address and explore the potential effects of participants' personal relationships within online peer assessment. Moreover, preservice elementary teachers' previous interactions and current relationships with their peers, as well as concerns about peers reactions, were found to have had a prominent effect on their decision-making during the peer assessment process. Future studies should therefore aim to explore how participant anonymity affects the actions of preservice teachers' and the reliability of the assessment process.

Author Contribution Statement

The author contributed 100% of this article.

Conflicts of Interest

There is no conflict of interest in this study.

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Genişletilmiş Özet

Giriş

Yükseköğretim kurumlarında geleneksel olarak uygulanan değerlendirme yöntemlerinin öğretmen adaylarının mezun olduklarında karşılanacakları talepkar ve rekabetçi hayata hazırlamakta yetersiz kaldığı sıklıkla dile getirilmiş ve alternatif ölçme araçlarının yükseköğretimde kullanımının öğrencilere mezun olduklarında uygulayabilecekleri beceriler sağlayacağı alanyazında vurgulanmıştır (Thomas, Martin ve Pleasants, 2011). Bu bağlamda yenilikçi bir bakış açısı ile öğrencileri değerlendirme sürecine daha etkin bir şekilde dahil etmesiyle akran değerlendirmesi zaman içinde popüler bir yaklaşım olarak ortaya çıkmıştır (Topping, 2017).

Özellikle öğrenci temelli öğretim ve değerlendirme uygulamalarının daha sık bir şekilde kullanılmasıyla beraber, öğretmenlerin ders kapsamında tamamlamak zorunda olduğu iş yükü artmaktadır (Badea ve Popescu, 2019). Akran değerlendirmesi ise değerlendirme sürecindeki iş yükünü azaltmak için kullanılabilir yenilikçi bir yöntem olarak öne çıkmaktadır. Buna ek olarak, akran değerlendirme uygulamaları öğrencilere elde ettikleri teorik bilgileri kullanabilmek ve değerlendirme süreci hakkında daha derinlemesine bilgi sahibi olmak için fırsatlar sunmaktadır. Akran değerlendirmesinin hem eğitsel hem de uygulamaya yönelik faydalarının, eğitimcileri bu yaklaşımı daha sık uygulamaya motive ettiği görülmektedir.

Akran değerlendirmesi uygulamalarının kullanımı zaman içerisinde artsa da, bazı öğrencilerin akran değerlendirmesi uygulamalarını adil olarak görmedikleri ve akranlarının subjektif olarak değerlendirme yapabileceklerinden çekindikleri görülmektedir (Ryan, Marshall, Porter ve Jia, 2007). Genel olarak bakıldığında akran değerlendirme süreci sırasında güvenilirliği sağlamaya yönelik karşılaşılan problemler, değerlendirenlerin alandaki uzmanlık düzeyine yönelik sınırlılıkları, değerlendirenlerin ve değerlendirilenlerin arasındaki kişisel ilişkilerin değerlendirme sürecine olan etkileri akran değerlendirme sürecinin olumsuz özellikleri olarak sıralanmaktadır (Liu ve Arabasız, 2006).

Yöntem

Her ne kadar alayazında uygulama temelli değerlendirme yöntemlerinin zaman içerisinde popüleritesinin artırdığı vurgulanmış olsa da (Medland, 2016), bu çalışma kapsamında dersi alan öğrenciler akran değerlendirmesi sürecinin uygulanmasına ani ve şiddetli şekilde muhalefet etmiştir. Bu durum karşısında söz konusu şiddetli itirazların altında yatan sebeplerin araştırılması planlanmış ve bu doğrultuda sınıf öğretmeni adaylarının akran değerlendirme sürecine ilişkin görüşlerini incelemeyi amaçlayan bu nitel çalışma tamamlanmıştır.

Çalışma Grubu

Bu çalışmanın amacı doğrultusunda katılımcılar, akademik bir poster sunumu oturumu sırasında akran değerlendirmesinin uygulanabilmesi için özel olarak tasarlanmış lisans seviyesindeki bir derse kayıt yaptıran öğrenciler arasından ölçüt örnekleme yöntemiyle seçilmiştir. Söz konusu derse kayıt yaptıran ve dersi tamamlayan 106 öğrenciden 58'i açık uçlu sorulardan oluşan anketi yanıtlamaya gönüllü olurken, 12 öğrenci yarı yapılandırılmış bireysel görüşmelere, 17'si ise dört-beş kişiden oluşan odak grup görüşmelerine katılmayı tercih etmişlerdir.

Verilerin Toplanması ve Analizi

Çalışma kapsamında sınıf öğretmeni adayları okul öncesi eğitimde ilköğretim yaklaşımları, erken çocukluk programlarında eğitici oyunların uygulanması ve erken çocukluktan ilköğretim programlarına geçiş gibi konuları temel alan akademik posterler hazırlamışlardır. Poster hazırlanma süreci sırasında dersin öğretmeni sınıf öğretmeni adaylarına dönütler sağlamış ve akran değerlendirme

sürecinde kullanılacak kriterler dersin eğitmeni ve öğrencilerle beraber oluşturulmuştur. Poster sunumundan bir hafta önce öğrencilerin taslak posterlerini sunduğu ve akranlarının 10 puanlık değerlendirme kriterlerini uyguladığı bir pilot etkinlik düzenlenmiş ve sınıf öğretmeni adaylarına kriterleri anlamak ve akran değerlendirme sürecine yönelik deneyim kazandırmak için fırsat sunulmuştur.

Akademik poster oturumunun ve akran değerlendirme sürecinin hemen ardından, sınıf öğretmeni adaylarına açık uçlu sorulardan oluşan bir anket dağıtılmış ve gönüllü katılımcıların doldurması istenmiştir. Benzer şekilde değerlendirme uygulamasının tamamlanmasının ardından gönüllülerin istekleri doğrultusunda belirlenen tarihlerde yarı yapılandırılmış ve odak grup görüşmelerinin tamamı gerçekleştirilmiştir. Açık uçlu sorulardan oluşan anket vasıtasıyla öğretmen adaylarının katıldıkları akran değerlendirme sürecine ilişkin anlık deneyimlerinin araştırılması hedeflenirken, yarı yapılandırılmış ve odak grup görüşmeleri katılımcıların akran değerlendirme süreci hakkındaki genel görüşleri üzerine bilgi toplanması amaçlanmıştır.

Katılımcıların akran değerlendirmesi sürecine yönelik görüşlerinin derinlemesine araştırılabilmesi için üçleme metodu uygulanmış olup (Creswell, 2013; Yıldırım ve Şimşek, 2016), veriler açık uçlu anket, yarı yapılandırılmış ve odak grup görüşme yöntemleriyle toplanmıştır. Veri analizi süresince Corbin ve Strauss' un (1990) güvenilir bir araştırma tasarlamaya yönelik önerileri temel alınmış, açık kodlama uygulamaları kullanılarak ilk olarak verilerinin %15'i analiz edilmiş ve kodlama kitapçıkları ortaya çıkarılmıştır. Elde edilen kodlama kitapçıkları ile verinin tamamı incelenmiştir. Veri analizi sürecinin durağan olmaması ve bu süreç sırasında bazı kodların yok olması ve yeni kodların ortaya çıkması nedeniyle Lincoln ve Guba (1985)' nin nitel veri analizi tekniği kullanılmıştır. Bu kapsamda ortaya çıkan yeni temaların daha etkin bir şekilde tanımlanması için gerekli kodlar genişletilmiş veya yeni kodlar oluşturulmuş ve temalar/alt temalar arasındaki daha önce fark edilemeyen ilişkiler tanımlanmıştır.

Bulgular

Çalışmaya katılan sınıf öğretmeni adayları objektif bir şekilde değerlendirme yapmakta zorlandıklarını belirtmişlerdir. Akranlarının kendilerine vereceği potansiyel tepkilerin, akranlar arasında bulunan karşılıklı çıkara dayalı ilişkilerin etkilenmesine yönelik endişelerin, akranlar arasında yaşanan geçmiş ilişkilerin akran değerlendirmesi sürecinde sınıf öğretmeni adaylarının objektifliğini etkileyen temel faktörler oldukları görülmüştür. Çalışmaya katılan sınıf öğretmeni adayları sıklıkla akranlarının tarafsızlığına ve çalışmalarını etkili bir şekilde değerlendirmeye yönelik yetersizliklerine ilişkin endişelerini dile getirmişlerdir. Buna ek olarak, sınıf öğretmeni adayları akran değerlendirme sürecini içselleştirmek yerine dersin eğitmeninin puanlama becerilerine ve objektifliğine olan güvenlerini vurgulamayı tercih etmişler ve dersin eğitmeninin vereceği puanın da akran değerlendirme süreci kapsamında elde edilecek toplam puana eklenmesinin önemini belirtmişlerdir.

Sonuç, Tartışma ve Öneriler

Çalışma kapsamında sınıf öğretmeni adaylarının bir akademik poster sunumu sırasında gerçekleştirmiş oldukları akran değerlendirme sürecine yönelik görüşleri araştırılmıştır. Sınıf öğretmeni adaylarının akranlarının tepkilerine ilişkin kaygıları, iyi not alma konusundaki karşılıklı çıkara dayalı ilişkileri ve öğretmen adayları arasında önceden kurulmuş olumlu ve olumsuz kişisel ilişkiler akran değerlendirmesi sırasında subjektif olarak değerlendirme yapılmasının üç ana nedeni olarak ortaya çıkmaktadır. Söz konusu bulgular alanyazında yer alan diğer çalışmaların sonuçlarıyla da eşleşmektedir (Falchikov ve Goldfinch, 2000; Magin, 2001; Carvalho, 2013; Ryan ve diğerleri, 2007). Okul kültürünün ve akranlar arasındaki ilişkilerin sınıf öğretmeni adaylarının karar verme süreçleri üzerinde ne kadar etkili olduğu göz önünde bulundurulduğunda, öğrenciler arasındaki geçmiş ve güncel yaşantıların akran değerlendirme süreci üzerindeki etkilerinin araştırılmasının önemi ortaya çıkmaktadır.

Struyven, Dochy ve Janssens (2005) öğrencilerin akran değerlendirme sürecini bazı geleneksel değerlendirme yöntemlerinden daha adil ve daha teşvik edici olarak algıladıklarını ifade etmiş olsalar da bu çalışmaya sınıf öğretmeni adayları akranlarına güvenmediklerini açıkça belirtmişlerdir. Buna ek olarak, sınıf öğretmeni adaylarını dersin eğitmeninin objektif bir şekilde hareket edebileceğini ve öğretmen değerlendirmesine yönelik güvenlerini vurgulamış, akran değerlendirme sürecini denetleyen bir otoritenin gerekliliğine ilişkin inançlarını vurgulamışlardır (Sadler ve Good, 2006). Sınıf öğretmeni adaylarının akran değerlendirmesi sırasında ortaya koymuş olduğu subjektif yargılar, Boud ve Falchikov' un (2007) kurumlar tarafından akran değerlendirmesine hızlı bir şekilde geçiş yapılmasının tehlikesine ve Vu ve Dall'Alba' nın (2007) akran değerlendirmesinin yol açabileceği etik problemlere yönelik uyarılarının dikkate alınmasının önemini ortaya koymaktadır. Özellikle mezuniyet not ortalamasının öğrencilerin eğitim hayatını ve kariyer seçeneklerini nasıl etkilediği düşünüldüğünde, öğretmenlerin akran değerlendirmesini düzey belirleyici bir eğitsel araç olarak kullanırken temkinli olmalarının gerekliliği ortaya çıkmaktadır.