

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON NEW HORIZONS IN EDUCATION
INTE2012

Teaching Applications of Prospective Teachers in Transition:
Primary School and Pre-School

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Abstract

In this study, two of gains related to Atatürk in the course of life sciences in primary school curriculum and renewed pre-school curriculum were determined by researchers for the purpose of the study. Gains are related to the disciplines of mathematics and life sciences. Scheduled teaching for 6 age group and 1st class students were administered by a total of four groups including prospective teachers from classroom teachers and pre-school education. Prospective teachers in each group were constituted by 4-5 persons. The study used a combination of qualitative and quantitative patterns. Data were gathered with *evaluation form of the teaching process* which was prepared by the researchers. Due to the closeness of the 6-7 year old age group's age and development characteristics, the conducted activities demonstrated similarity. Prospective primary school teachers had the opportunity to observe the circumstances of year 1 students before they come to primary school and prospective pre-school teachers had the opportunity to observe the development of students in 6 year old age group after them. With this study, prospective teachers have had the opportunity to practice the theoretical knowledge on development, learning and teaching they learnt till present.

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Key words: Prospective teachers, concept of Atatürk, transition to primary school and pre-school education, primary school education, pre-school education.

1. Introduction

Primary education preparation is easy and adequate learning of the child without experiencing emotional confusion. The child reaches this preparation by completing the things it has learnt in the “pre-school period” (Oktay, 2002). It is important that preparatory activities are carried out for children coming

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to school without benefitting from the opportunities of pre-school education (Bilir, 2005). The setting in which the child is can directly influence the child (Oktay, 2002). The readiness of the child for school is possible with the child getting through this critical period in its development successfully and through conscious guidance. Education of the child begins at home and experiences acquired at home are combined with newly learnt knowledge (Yazıcı, 2002; Parlakyıldız & Yıldızbaş, 2004). Preparing children for primary education is among the most important objectives of pre-school education. Thus, in pre-school education preparation for primary education is one of the most important areas to be emphasized (Polat Unutkan, 2006, pp.7). Conducted studies suggest that children, who have received good pre-school education are better than their peers in adaptation to primary education and their academic achievement, just as in all fields of development in future years (Yılmaz, 2003, pp. 13; Sevinç & Bayhan, 2006, pp. 212). The first step to primary education and thus, life is possible through the correct learning of concepts.

1.1. Learning Concepts

According to Piaget, concepts actualize in two stages: The first stage is concept formation and the second stage is concept attainment. Concept formation occurs in two steps: 1. First concepts are learnt through experiences children acquire visually. 2. Afterwards, details among abstract characteristics are learnt. By perceiving the similar and different aspects of the concept, the individual generalizes the similarities and forms concepts. Concept formation is intense in childhood years as everything around the child is new. The concept acquisition is the second stage of concept learning. In this stage logical grouping is based on the characteristic of the formed concept together with the developed schema. Concept learning in children generally proceeds through the stages of recognition, naming, matching, ordering, grouping, and differentiating.

In learning concepts, in order to aid concepts and generalizations, model works, illustrations, photographs, pictures, video etc. experienced with real objects as a result of an activity is required (Cited by: Birbili, 2007, pp. 144). Another approach suggested by Taba (1966) is guiding of the student to discovery by the teacher through questions asked. It is the direction of children to observe through questions such as “what did you hear? What did you see? Why?” etc and ensuring that they differentiate similarities and differences between concepts as a result of their observations. Here, the teacher is only the one that asks questions. This strategy is called the “list, group, label strategy” (Cited by: Birbili, 2007, pp. 145).

According to Birbili (2007), no matter which strategy is utilized, the early childhood period should be focused on carefully in concept education. Another factor to be paid attention to in concept learning and generalization is to present the child with the most possible examples and experiences. When presenting children with various examples, the teacher has the opportunity to observe the achievement of the child in concept learning (Birbili, 2007, pp. 146). Example selection is a critical component of concept acquisition. The first samples should be real samples or pictures. This ensures that the concept is learnt more firmly by the child (Birbili, 2007, pp. 146). The role of the teacher in concept learning is to ensure the child has the most possible experience using his/her senses, the child has knowledge on what s/he knows till present, form experiences suitable for comparison, to guide in the determination of similarities and differences between objects, and thus, to ensure that the child finds meaningful and useful information in daily life (Birbili, 2007, pp. 147).

1.2. Purpose and significance of the study

Statements for Atatürk used by families, teachers, visual media and social environment are the first concepts created by pupils mentally and learned by them. The way subject of Atatürk is being taught changes depending on these factors. This hinders proper learning of the concept of Atatürk and causes miscomprehension. However a pupil has his/her first information on Atatürk in the preschool period. Introduction of Atatürk to the pupils is achieved with the education delivered in preschool and primary education. Learning basic concepts in a meaningful way seems to be associated with success in reading, comprehension and mathematics (Busch, 1980, pp. 38–48). When the literature is examined, it can be observed that there are no textbooks, materials or teaching cases oriented at practice that are suitable for 6-7 year old age group student development with regards to the teaching of the concept of Atatürk. At the same time, as the study is first in its field, it is expected that the results to be obtained from the study shall constitute an example for and guide future studies. In the revised pre-school and year 1 primary social studies curriculum in this study, the acquisitions concerning Atatürk can be gathered under the objectives of “Recognizing Atatürk” and “Comprehending the significance of Atatürk for the Turkish nation”. For this purpose, by taking the development levels of pre-school 6 year old and primary year 1 students into consideration, the necessary acquisitions have been arranged by researchers as follows.

Objective 1. Recognizing Atatürk

Acquisitions:

1. Being able to tell Atatürk’s place of birth, date of birth, date and place of death,
2. Being verbally able to share memories of Atatürk pertaining to his childhood,
3. Being able to form a family tree demonstrating Atatürk’s father, mother, and sister,

Objective 2. Comprehending the significance of Atatürk for the Turkish nation

Acquisition:

1. Having knowledge on reforms in the fields of alphabet, measurements, units, and dress.

Having students acquire the selected objectives is important for them to have an in-depth understanding and knowledge of the concept of Atatürk. At the same time, how Atatürk is taught at educational institutions and which matters concerning Atatürk are focused on in lesson plans have an active role in the selection of objectives. By taking these matters into consideration, teaching of the concept of Atatürk is actualized in the 1st primary year by prospective pre-school (PreS) teachers and prospective primary school (PS) teachers in the 6 year old age group through unique designs they have developed.

1.3. Research Problem

How is the teaching process developed by Prospective PreS and PS Teachers for developing the concept of Atatürk in the 6-7 year old age group?

2. METHODOLOGY

In this study, two of gains related to Atatürk in the course of life sciences in primary school curriculum and renewed pre-school curriculum were determined by researchers for the purpose of the study. Gains are related to the disciplines of mathematics and life sciences. Scheduled teaching for 6 age group and 1st grade students were administered by a total of four groups including prospective teachers from classroom teachers and pre -school education. Prospective teachers have been divided into 8 groups with 4-5 persons in each group. When the groups were being formed, the teacher determined the group members themselves; however, matching between the groups was determined randomly by the researchers. The study used a combination of qualitative and quantitative patterns. Data were gathered with evaluation form of the teaching process which was prepared by the researchers.

3. FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATIONS

Data pertaining to the structured field study were collected through the graded scoring key called “teaching process assessment form” developed by the researchers. It was evaluated through the preparation, teaching process, and presentation stages. The three achievement levels of poor (1 point), acceptable (2 points), and can be set as an example (3 points) have been determined in grading. Educational curriculums & teaching and assessment & evaluation experts’ opinions have been obtained for the content validity of the scale. The items have been arranged in line with expert opinions and in compliance with the purpose of the study. The reliability of the graded scoring key has been examined through the consistency percentage of the scoring of the researchers. For the consistency between the evaluation results of the researchers, the Cohen Kappa coefficient has been calculated and determined as $K_{\text{preparation}} = .82$, $K_{\text{implementation}} = .88$ and $K_{\text{presentation}} = .55$. According to the obtained Kappa coefficients, excellent consistency in the preparation process, excellent consistency in the implementation process, and reasonable consistency in the presentation process have been observed between researchers.

Findings on the evaluation of observers on the teaching process of the work groups can be found in Table 1 (See appendix I). Accordingly, it has been observed that only the 2nd group in the PS teacher group could not complete their pre-teaching preparations (For instance, ordering of desks, preparation of students for teaching). It has been determined that the groups experienced problems in preparing a detailed curriculum in compliance with objectives and acquisitions. When prepared lesson plans were examined, it has been observed that the groups did not assist each other in the preparation of lesson plans and they could not prepare lesson plans complying with acquisitions. There were no bibliographies in any of the lesson plans, no information was provided on the assessment process, and there were no activities for the development areas of students (prepared by prospective PS teachers) in any of the pre-school lesson plans. In the PS teaching lesson plan (prepared by prospective PreS teachers) the introduction and development steps have not been prepared at a suitable level. All the groups were able to complete the teaching process as they had planned.

When the teaching process was examined, it has been observed that attention was drawn to the topic in the groups and continuity was achieved. No association between subjects was observed in the presentations of the 2nd Group of prospective PS teachers. It has been observed that the prepared instruments and materials in the general of the groups were not in compliance with teaching principles and they were not functional. It was observed that some of the stages of concept teaching were carried out correctly. For instance, photos with Ataturk and his family together were brought to the classroom. The students were told that the person in the photo was Ataturk and the materials with photos of Ataturk were presented to the children and Ataturk’s physical and general characteristics were discussed. Right after the correct identification and reference of Ataturk’s physical characteristics, informative feedback was provided. For instance, after the child found and pointed out Ataturk, the prospective teacher reinforced the correct behavior by saying “Good for you! You recognize Ataturk”. Different photos (photos taken in crowded settings) were shown again afterwards in order to determine whether or not the child recognized Ataturk and permanence of the behavior was ensured.

Before coming to the 1st year of PS, children will have learnt many concepts around them with concrete samples at a classification level. By means of showing children photos of Ataturk’s family, through various exemplifications, Ataturk, his mother, father, and sister have been introduced. Thus, having the child associate the concept of family and Ataturk is achieved. In addition to this being necessary for the teaching of the concept at a concrete and recognition level, concepts enable the recalling of concerned preliminary learning. Despite Ataturk’s resemblance of his father, they were able to differentiate Ataturk. However, there have been children, who said that his mother was his grandmother.

When presenting Atatürk's family photo in textbooks, his father, Ali Rıza Efendi should also be in this photo. As a matter of fact, in the 2004 the 1st primary year Turkish textbook, Atatürk's father's photo was not used and in the 3rd Social Sciences textbook it was presented in a separate small photo. It is considered that this shall cause the student to acquire a deficient behavior in recognizing Atatürk's family (Acar, 2006).

For the purpose of preventing incorrect comprehension of students, the following activities have been conducted by prospective teachers: Children have been talked about the family photos in Atatürk corners. Recognition and naming of his mother, father, and sister was ensured. In order to ensure the permanence of learning, photos used in the presentations were utilized. First, the children were directed the question of "Do you know the person or persons in this photo?" and then these photos were randomly handed out to the children. The names of Atatürk's mother, father, and sister were asked separately and they were requested to match the handed out photos and the names. The photos of students providing the correct answer were hung up on the panel on the wall.

The students were provided the reforms in the form of dressing and the changes in measurement and units of measure through the drama technique. The prospective teachers formed pairs and had them wear the old and new form of dress. The pairs in both cases displayed three plays consisting of reading a newspaper, purchasing fabrics, and purchasing fruits. In the first case, the pairs read newspapers with the old and new alphabet. In the dialogue among themselves, they stated that they could read the newspaper in the old alphabet but they could not write using this alphabet. In the second case, the newspaper written in Turkish could be easily read. In the second and third plays, units of measurements were provided to the students by using standard and nonstandard units. After the students watched the drama, they answered the questions of the prospective teachers. The difference between pairs in terms of dress and units of measurement were demonstrated. Afterwards, the prospective teacher conducted comparative activities enabling the students to learn through "overarm" and "okka" as nonstandard units of measurement and "meter" and "kilogram" as standard units of measurement. An idea of the length of the desk was obtained by the prospective teacher and students through measurement in fathoms. Afterwards, information was obtained on the length of the desk in meters through the use of a measuring stick. In this way, the students acquired the types of reforms in terms of units of measurement. Furthermore, 4 human models were stuck to the board. A selection was made between the old and new form of dress and the students were requested to dress the models.

The following questions were directed at the students as assessment questions and examples were provided from the answers:

1. Was it good for us to shift to the new measurement instruments from the old measurement ones?
2. How did we shift from our old circumstance to our new circumstance?
3. Who caused us to experience this shift?
4. What would have happened if Atatürk had not done these? (We would always have to wear burqas. We could not go shopping. We could have read newspapers but not be able to write. The letters are too difficult.)
5. If it wasn't for Atatürk, what would have we be wearing? (Burqa, Fes)
6. If it wasn't for Atatürk, would we have been measuring everything correctly? (No. overarm was removed and it was replaced with meters.)
7. If it wasn't for Atatürk, what type of letters would we have had? (very confusing.)
8. Was it a good thing that Atatürk granted us new letters? (yes)

In the Pre-S group, the responses of students to the assessment questions were considered to be satisfactory and successful. Studies on length in the 1st year of PS education and in the Pre-S period begin with nonstandard units of measurement. Children measure objects they own and objects in their daily lives with nonstandard units of measurement. This procedure is repeated with the assistance of the teacher

using a ruler. They are informed on units of measurement by discussing the differences of standard and nonstandard measurements and using terminology such as which is longer, which is shorter, which is older, which is newer, which is heavier, which is lighter, etc. Rulers are used in length activities and scales are used in weight activities (Copley, 2000; Clements and Stephan 2004; Charlesworth & Radloff, 1991; cited by: Yıldıırım, 2010, pp. 149-152).

When the Table in Appendix 1 is analyzed, it has been determined that there are deficiencies in prospective PS teachers effectively using their voice and body language. The fact that prospective teachers are having such an experience in different educational institutes for the first time can be indicated as a reason for this. Prospective PS teachers have had the opportunity to acquire experience in relation to pre-school children and prospective PreS teachers had the opportunity to acquire experience in relation to the classroom setting of 1st year students, the approach of teachers, functioning of rules, and in-class arrangements. Prospective PS teachers had difficulties in drawing the attention of pre-school children and ensuring classroom dominance. In most groups, most members attended the presentations. During presentations, prospective teachers generally provided satisfactory and correct answers to questions from students. Full participation in groups observing each other was not possible for the 1st Group of the pre-school section.

4. Results and Recommendations

The findings obtained in this study have been assessed:

1. Due to the closeness of the 6-7 year old age group's age and development characteristics, the conducted activities demonstrated similarity. This caused researchers and groups to obtain reliable results in their assessments of each other.

2. Prospective PS teachers had the opportunity to observe the circumstances of year 1 students before they come to PS and prospective PreS teachers had the opportunity to observe the development of students in 6 year old age group after them. Education is a whole and PreS and PS teaching should be assessed with a scientific approach as the continuation of each other. The study has attempted to ensure this.

3. In their evaluations, the researchers have determined that some difficulties were being experienced when prospective teachers were teaching in conformity with the development level of the 6 year old age group. This could be caused by the failure of the groups to adequately inform each other on the concerned classroom settings.

4. Another result of the study is the prospective teachers experiencing different class levels for the first time, interdisciplinary works, and producing a joint product.

5. With this study, prospective teachers have had the opportunity to practice the theoretical knowledge on development, learning, and teaching they learnt till present.

The correct and effective teaching of the concept of Atatürk can be ensured through interdisciplinary studies and education-teaching cases that are arranged according to the development level of students by taking study based teaching as a basis.

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Appendix A.

Table 1. Results on the evaluation of observers on the teaching process

	1 st group				2 nd group			
	B	E	B	E	B	E	B	E
	Pre-S	Pre-S	PS	PS	Pre-S	Pre-S	PS	PS
Preparation								
The interview took place with schools in a seamless manner.	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Classroom environment was prepared for teaching.	3	3	3	3	3	3	1	1
A detailed lesson plan was made in accordance with the objectives and achievements.	1	2	1	2	2	2	1	1
The necessary information was collected by using a variety of resources.	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Working as planned was prepared and completed.	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Implementation	1. group				2. group			
	B	E	B	E	B	E	B	E
	Pre-S	Pre-S	PS	PS	Pre-S	Pre-S	PS	PS

Attention was drawn to the issue and continuity was ensured.	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	2
Content is organized.	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	2
Equipment and materials were prepared and used in accordance with the principles of teaching.	2	2	2	2	3	3	3	3
Concept learning steps were performed correctly.	3	3	3	3	2	2	2	2
Consistent statements were made on the subject.	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Presentation	1.group				2. group			
	B	E	B	E	B	E	B	E
	Pre-S	Pre-S	PS	PS	Pre-S	Pre-S	PS	PS
Groups used his voice and body language effectively.	2	2	2	2	3	3	3	2
All members of the group participated in the presentation and helped to the group members.	2	2	3	3	3	3	3	3
The presentation was supported by appropriate materials.	2	2	2	3	3	3	3	3
Adequate and correct answers were given to questions asked by students during the presentation.	2	3	2	3	3	3	2	2
Groups have observed each other with full participation.	1	1	2	2	2	3	2	2

*B and E represents researchers' first names.