

WCES 2012

Prospective teachers' opinions on concept of Atatürk in the age group of 6-7 years

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Abstract

It is very important for teaching the concept of Atatürk to have textbooks that are appropriate for development of pupils aged 6-7 and to have material and application-oriented instructional conditions. In this regard, concept of Atatürk is taught by the prospective preschool teachers in 1st Grades while by prospective classroom teachers in pupils aged 6 through original instructional designs developed by the prospective teachers on their own. Activities carried out in the classroom showed similarity because of the closeness of the ages and developmental characteristics of the age group of 6-7 years.

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Keywords: Prospective Teachers, Concept of Atatürk, Age Group of 6 Years, Primary School 1st Grade Pupils

1. Introduction

The speeches uttered in classes by families, teachers and visual media to compliment Atatürk are the first Atatürk related concepts learned in classes by children (Acar, 2006). Students start to formally learn about Atatürk at preschool period. Therefore, introduction of Atatürk to students should start at preschool period. The preschool curriculum which has been renewed for 2005-2006 school year offers the following issues to introduce Atatürk to students; “Objective 20, recognition of Atatürk, Gain 1. tells about the facts in Atatürk’s life, Gain 2. tells about Atatürk’s personal characteristics. It was found that the preschool children aged between 36-72 months have owned these objectives and gains. (Preschool Curriculum, 2005-2006). The first year social studies curriculum addresses some questions related to why there are “A.1.20 Atatürk’s Picture, Turkish flag, İstiklal Marşı and Atatürk’s address to Turkish Youth in the classes. C.1.6 presents Atatürk’s childhood memories in the class. A.2.24. includes the gains related to making research about Atatürk’s educational background and shares the findings related to that with students (Vural, 2008, p. 287-360). With this regard, the gains related to Atatürk within the renewed preschool and 1st year social studies curriculum are gathered under the objective of “getting to know Atatürk”. The activities prepared for teaching the concept of Atatürk are developed by prospective teachers. Based on these activities, primary school prospective teachers have performed teaching sessions in the group aged 6, and the early childhood prospective teachers have performed teaching on 1st year students.

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2. Methodology

In this study which was carried out to look for an answer to the question “How do prospective preschool and classroom teachers evaluate teaching process for development of the concept of Atatürk in the age group of 6-7 years?”. For this reason, criteria sampling method was used. The most basic principle in such a sampling method is to study all the cases meeting the requirements of a series of criteria (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2005, p. 112). The criteria considered in this study are; 1. to have taken or to be taking the courses of School Experience and Teaching Application, 2. to be taking the course of “Preparation for Primary School and Primary School Curriculum” provided in undergraduate education curriculum in ECE, 3. to have successfully completed the course of “Early Childhood Education” provided in Primary School Undergraduate education curriculum.

The sample of this study consists of last year fall term prospective teachers at Primary School education (47 prospective teachers) and Early Childhood Education (36 prospective teachers) from Necatibey Education Faculty at Balıkesir University in 2009-2010 academic year. The prospective teachers were divided into 8 groups of 4-5 people for each group. However, the matching between the groups was done with the help of random sampling method by the researchers. The personal evaluations related to teaching were done with the help of interview forms consisting of 5 open-ended questions in accordance with the content of the study. The qualitative data obtained from this study was analyzed with the help of descriptive analysis method.

3. Findings

When we examine the views of prospective teachers from both departments, vast majority of the candidate teachers were found to agree on the benefits of the Project. The prospective teachers especially suggested that they had the opportunity to have teaching experience in different classroom settings and also emphasized that the study would contribute a lot to their career. Whereas there are those who suggest that this study is a applicable and enjoyable one, there are also those who suggest negative evaluations about the study. These problems mostly arise as a consequence of lack of communication within group and between groups and as they cannot spare time to one another. 25 views related to positive attitudes, 19 views related to negative attitudes, 26 views related to problems experienced, 32 views related to contribution of the project were submitted to researchers. The data in Table 1 presents categories and sub-categories (**positive attitudes**: nice, enjoyable, easy, **negative attitudes**: a needless study, intergroup problems, intergroup problems, fear; **experienced problems**: boredom, lack of communication, not being able to spare time to group study; **contribution of the Project**: beneficial, an authentic study, comparing students’ developmental differences, experiencing, seeing different classroom settings, contribution to career)

3.1. The findings related to individual evaluations in groups of ECE and PSE

The findings related to individual evaluations on teaching were examined in two parts. In the first part, views of prospective teachers from ECE were given directly and in the second part PSE prospective teachers’ views were given.

3.1.1. The findings related to individual evaluations in 1st group

ECE1. “We consider that this study was very enjoyable to us. Whereas we think that this study was not so necessary, it is an unique study. As the developmental characteristics of preschool and 1st year students are similar to one another, the activities performed in this study were not different from one another.”

ECE2. “We could have been better, especially as we were making the presentation. We had no difficulty in communication with the group of PSE, but we prepared most of the task to be done (especially preparing the lesson plan) by ourselves.”

PSE1. “This was my first school experience in real terms. We have come to this point starting from a compulsory study. In spite of this fact, everybody has done their job very carefully and enthusiastically. It was very beneficial as it helped preschool prospective teachers to see one step ahead in time, in other words, 1st year at primary school and also it helped primary school teacher’s one step behind their actual teaching targets, in other words, preschool year. Education is considered to be a whole thus, PSE and ECE are considered to be the rings of a single chain.

Therefore, recognition and completion of the rings of this chain was a good experience for prospective teachers. The information learned from books in texts has become a part of real life with the help of this experience.”

PSE2. “I think it was very good study. There were some problems in nature. Some members did not participate in this study. As some of our friends were fulfilling the tasks they were assigned effectively, some friends have never shown their faces. Although we are primary school teachers, we are supposed to know much about the characteristics of preschool students. This study is the one which we achieved that.”

3.1.2. The findings related to individual evaluations in 2nd group

ECE1. “It was a good study. Prospective teachers from PSE had the opportunity to see how their students were before they became first year students and similarly, prospective teachers from ECE also had the opportunity to see how the students they taught at preschool after they became first year students. However, there were some problems. The biggest problem was communication. As addressing, both presenters were too simple. This was normal, too because it is difficult to descend to students’ level and to achieve the level of students. This was actually the main body of the study. Both groups did their best. I believe that the presentations were very good.”

ECE2. “I personally believe that participating in first year classes and observing the class settings are opportunities hard to experience again. It was very remarkable that only one person did the presentation from the primary school teachers and that the others stood aside and only watch what was happening rather than helping.”

PSE1. “It was good for me. I saw and learned at which level first year students came and what they had learned at preschool period. I learned that I should not see first year students as blank boards to write on.”

PSE2. “It was very helpful for us to see the readiness levels of 1st year students coming to us, but I don’t know if it was necessary to prospective teachers from ECE.”

3.1.3. The findings related to individual evaluations in 3rd group

ECE1. “It was very enjoyable study. I was thinking of what and how to do in the beginning, but as we interacted with friends from PSE and from our group, we came up with a lot of new ideas. Thanks to cooperation, everything happened much easier. We felt frightened a little bit as we had never been in a primary school setting before. As the presentation was being performed, we realized that age group of 6-7 years had similar characteristics. If we examine the process as a whole, it was something very different and successful project that we had never tried before.”

ECE2. “Implementing the project in primary school was very helpful to us. We experienced it. We were very excited. We could control our excitement. It was a nice project in which we worked in cooperation.”

PSE1. “As the first we heard the project, we thought that it would be a little bit difficult, but it turned out to be very easy. I performed my first teaching experience in my life. As we are at primary school department, it was very beneficial to us in getting to know preschool education very closely.”

PSE2. “Our students will come to us at the first year of primary school. To know what those students had learned up to that level was a very beneficial study as it helped us to guess up to what level they could go up. I personally think that the project was very necessary for both of the departments. We could determine the level of aged group of 6 years and prospective teachers from ECE also could observe the conditions and developmental levels of their students after preschool.”

3.1.4 The findings related to individual evaluations in 4th group

ECE1. “It was a quite beneficial study. We participated in a class for presentation for the first time. We monitored that preschool children and first year students are very similar in many ways.”

ECE2. “It could have been a very nice and effective presentation, but the lack of communication among the groups and the injustices discouraged everybody. All materials were prepared by our group.”

PSE1. “We failed to work as a group. Everybody worked individually. We could do everything in the last minute. I personally think that this study which was carried out on preschool children was very unnecessary. I wish we had worked with only our own group rather than working with a group consisting of students from two different groups.”

PSE2. “Gathering people for a group work was very difficult. We used dramas and slides in the Project, but our Project did not develop as we wanted it to. If we had had more opportunities to practice, everything could have been better.”

3.1.5. The findings related to individual evaluations in 5th group

ECE1. “If my friends from preschool group had been different, it would have been more effective for both my own development and children’s education.”

ECE2. “As our group was crowded and as it consisted of those we did not know, we could not gather. We had to share the subject. Then, the number of those who did their full share of work was few. When we asked for a meeting, some of the members did not show up. The subject seemed to be very abstract. It was possible to form groups with less people. Then, it could be easier to get together.”

PSE1. “This Project seemed very strange to me in the beginning. However, once I started to learn the causes, I also started to think that it would be beneficial and it turned out as I wanted it to. I have the skill to guess what first year students having a preschool education could do and what they could know or not more or less.”

PSE2. “As the number of members in each group was too many, participation was very difficult. The instructors were very helpful. I can say that they were more willing than we are.”

3.1.6. The findings related to individual evaluations in 6th group

ECE1. “I believe that this Project was very helpful to us. It was our first teaching experience at primary school. We focused on the developmental differences between preschool students and 7 year old students. We realized that there are more rules at primary schools. It was both enjoyable and different activity for us. Instructors were always ready to help us whenever we needed. They spared time to each group. Could it have been better? Doubtlessly, we experienced some problems. It was hard for group to come together. There is always a better one in life. It was very nice in spite of all these. I wish to thank.”

ECE2. “ We worked very cooperatively with the other group. We prepared all the materials cooperatively. I believe that the presentation was very good. It was a very beneficial activity for us.”

PSE1. “With the help this Project, I could see what preschool students could learn and how much they could learn. Whereas we had learned about the developmental levels of our students in classes as their class teachers, we had the opportunity to experience it personally. When the class session started, we could hardly finish our preparation because the responsible teacher at the preschool institution did not help us. Moreover, even the students did not react adequately. As a consequence of all these, we felt stressed out and forgot some of the activities we had planned to do. Although we had prepared for it very carefully, and built good communication with the other group, things did not go as we wanted.”

PSE2. “Although we were reluctant to accept this Project, the outcomes were very positive. We had the opportunity to see what happened in the junior by empathizing. In spite of all the difficulties emerging as a consequence of working in groups, we could reach a common ground.”

3.1.7. The findings related to individual evaluations in 7th group

ECE1. “It was nice to be part of such a Project and to monitor the first year students, but we had some problems with the members of the other group. It was bad to be with them in this Project.”

ECE2. “ If this Project had been implemented last year, everything would have been difficult. As we are very busy this year, we had problems with sparing time for this. This was the only problem. This Project was not unnecessary. I could see what I lacked about Atatürk. I am planning to adapt to preschool teaching program in my career.”

PSE1. “As there is not much difference between primary school first year students and preschool children, this Project was not supposed to compel us so much. However, the negative attitudes of both our group members and the members of the other group made this more difficult to implement.”

PSE2. “When I first heard about this Project, I thought it was very nonsense. The attitudes of the members of the other group made my thoughts about that bigger. As the day of presentation came, my thoughts about that changed. No matter how much I wanted to be a primary school teacher, it helped me a lot. As the 6th year students would be the first year students one year later, it helped us a lot in learning their educational statues and their readiness. That is very helpful to those who plan to be primary school teachers.”

3.1.8. The findings related to individual evaluations in 8th group

ECE1. “We could work with both my group members and the members of the other group during the implementation. We always helped one another. Although it seemed to be very boring and hard to practice in the beginning, it turned out to be nice and enjoyable one in the end. Having the opportunity to monitor the first year students was very beneficial as it helped us monitor the transition period. It was a very necessary activity.”

ECE2. “We worked together with group members along the implementation. Although this implementation seemed to be very boring in the beginning, it was very beneficial as it helped primary school and preschool students to understand one another and as it helped 6 year students to foresee 7 year students well in advance. If this implementation could be repeated every year, I personally believe that it would be very beneficial for primary school teacher ship.”

PSE1. “The Project which we were involved in helped me a lot in gaining my self confidence back. Making post evaluation of the Project was very necessary as it made it possible to get feedback.”

PSE2. “This project in which we were involved was an excellent project. Even those friends who considered that this project had nothing to do with them felt fully satisfied following the implementation of the project. We can conclude that people should not be opinionated just looking at the satisfaction we had from the project. The preschool children were very cute. It was my first teaching experience with them, and it was excellent.”

4. Discussion

The findings obtained from this study were evaluated; 1- As 6 and 7 year old students have some shared developmental characteristics, the activities performed in this study were very similar to one another. That contributed to researchers and groups to come up with reliable results. 2- Prospective SNÖ teachers had the opportunity to monitor the performance of the first year students in their preschool year, and OÖ teachers also had the opportunity to monitor 6 year age group’s performance in their first year at primary school. Education is considered as a whole and primary school education and preschool education should be considered as parts of a whole. This project aimed to achieve that. 3- Researchers have concluded in their discussions that prospective teachers had problems in carrying out appropriate teaching to 6-7 year age groups. The reason for that may be that groups did not inform one another adequately about the class settings in which they are teaching. 4- Another finding of this study is that teachers experience teaching in different class settings for the first time in their career, and thus they can come up with shared products as a consequence of inter disciplinary studies. 5- With the help of this project, prospective teachers had the opportunity to implement the speculative information that they had learned related to education, learning and teaching.

The teaching of the concept of Atatürk effectively and appropriately can be done adapting education and training sessions conducted in accordance with students’ developmental level and interdisciplinary studies.

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