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Perceptions of Early Childhood Preservice Teachers on Early Childhood Education Undergraduate Program Courses

Arif Yılmaz, Hacettepe University, arif@hacettepe.edu.tr, https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5106-7721

Nevra Atış Akyol, Sivas Cumhuriyet University, naakyol@cumhuriyet.edu.tr, https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4697-847X

Şifa Kevser Çakmak, Hacettepe University, sifa.k.c@hacettepe.edu.tr, https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1500-965X

Esra Tuğba Çoban Söylemez, Hacettepe University, esratuba@hacettepe.edu.tr, https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6548-4320

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Abstract

The purpose of the study was to find out the contribution of general culture (GC), pedagogical knowledge (PK), and content knowledge (CK) courses to the professional development of preservice teachers in early childhood education programs. As a part of a mix-method research study, this survey uses a rank-order judgment methodology. Using a two-stage-cluster and random sampling - 432 students from 35 universities participated in the study during the 2018-2019 academic year. Data were gathered using an "Early Childhood Education Undergraduate Program Course Evaluation Form" and analyzed using pairwise comparison. With reference to the results, "Effective Communication" was chosen as the most beneficial one among the GC courses, and "Statistics" was selected as the least beneficial course. In addition, among the PK courses, "Teaching Practice I" was the most beneficial one, and "Assessment and Evaluation" was the least helpful course related to student perceptions. While the "Introduction to Early Childhood Education" course was the most beneficial course among the CK, "Research Project II" was listed as the least beneficial course. It was found that students' opinions about courses did not change concerning their gender, academic achievement, and the type of high school they had attended.

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Introduction

Economic issues such as the effective use of the available resources of countries and the creation of new resources are directly related to the quality of human resources. Increasing the quality of human resources is only possible with quality education (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2017; 2019). Therefore, education contributes not only to the development of individuals but also to the development of societies. Teacher training is a process that has been worked on since the existence of formal education systems and is shaped by different perspectives in different periods in line with the political, economic, and social expectations of countries. Similarly, until today, teacher training in Turkey has been shaped by different institutions and introduced in different formats considering society's needs after the Republic's proclamation.

Since the key to quality education is the teacher, teacher training programs should be carefully and thoroughly considered. The previous literature has shown that teacher training program quality is directly related to teacher quality (Cochran-Smith & Zeichner, 2005; Darling-Hammond, 2006), and teacher education programs have a profound impact on preservice teachers' learning, as well as the learning of children in schools from kindergarten to high school (Diez, 2010). Teacher knowledge and teaching expertise acquired in these programs have a good potential of impacting students' learning at all levels. With the understanding of the importance of teachers' roles in the quality of education (OECD, 2011; World Bank, 2011), efforts to increase their quality have gained momentum in Turkey, as well as in the rest of the world (Borko, 2004; İlğan, 2013; Lasley, Siedentop, & Yinger, 2006; Ministry of National Education [MoNE], 2017; OECD, 2005) The importance of teacher quality, as one of the critical tenets of quality education, is not limited to the quality of educational outcomes. Teachers also play a crucial role in helping children overcome poverty, lack of parental support, integration into school, and other obstacles they may face (Havik & Westergård, 2020). In other words, reaching educational reforms' goals can be fulfilled by having high-quality teachers in the workforce (Loeb, Rouse, & Shorris, 2007).

Another crucial dimension of a quality teacher program is its structure. Research points to the importance of combining theory and practice to complement each other and structuring both domains in a balanced way (Beck, Kosnik, & Rowsell, 2007; Nahal, 2010). Similarly, Darling-Hammond (2006) describes some of the standard features of quality teacher education programs. All coursework and clinical experiences should create a coherent learning experience, and coursework and clinical work should be guided and evaluated by well-defined frameworks or standards. Moreover, Yıldırım (2011) suggests that teacher education programs should contain both content and pedagogy, support practice with theory, and be able to establish effective collaboration with schools.

Since 1998, Turkey has used centralized teacher education programs in all education fields and levels—with some minor variance. Later, in 2006 and 2018, the Higher Education Council (HEC) revised and updated these programs. In this regard, as a part of this centralized structure, the early childhood education undergraduate program was revised and updated in 2006 and 2018, and 2013.

The Past and the Present of Early Childhood Pre-Service Teacher Education Programs in Turkey

In Turkey, early childhood teacher training is a new field in terms of high school, secondary school, and primary school levels; teacher training for early childhood levels was first discussed at the 10th National Education Council on 23-26 June 1981 (MoNE, 1981). At this meeting, some of the decisions agreed upon included the improvement of the access to early childhood education, development of an early childhood education curriculum, preparation of handbooks, organization of in-service training for early childhood teachers, and evaluation of teacher training resources. At the 12th National Education Council (18-22 June 1988), it was decided that early childhood education in higher education programs (pre-school and kindergarten) should continue to provide education for two years (MoNE, 1988). At the 14th National Education Council, committees and subcommittees were established to determine the definition, scope, importance, dissemination, material supply, and teacher training of early childhood education; it was also decided that universities initiate program development studies for training early childhood pre-service teachers and start opening practice schools within their premises (MoNE, 1993). In 1997, departments and programs for early childhood pre-service teachers were extended to a 4-year education period for the first time within the scope of the general restructuring of the HEC, and early childhood education departments were subsequently established (HEC Executive Board Decision Dated 04 November 1997, Number 97.39.2761).

The first early childhood education undergraduate program was introduced in 1998. In order to graduate from this initial program, 146 credits, 51 courses, and a total of 120 hours of theory and 58 hours of practical courses had to be completed. In addition, the program included practice courses in the 2nd, 6th, and 7th semesters, and the teaching practice course was included in the 8th semester (HEC, 1998a; 1998b). After restructuring teacher undergraduate programs in 2006, early childhood education was included in the department of primary education, and the undergraduate program of 1998 was updated. This program included courses that fell under three main categories: general knowledge (GC), pedagogical knowledge (PK), and content knowledge (CK). This course categorization has been preserved in all programs until today. The updated program of 1998 included 57 courses: 127 hours of theoretical courses and 48 hours of practical courses had to be taken to graduate with 151 credits. Practice courses were limited to one semester (5th semester), and teaching practice courses were offered in 2 semesters at the 7th and the 8th semesters (HEC, 2006). In 2013, the undergraduate program was revised within the scope of the Strengthening Pre-School Education Project. In this program, 61 courses were included, and, for 163 national credits, 139 hours of theory and 49 hours of practical courses had to be completed. The practice course was included in the 6th semester, but there was no change regarding teaching practice courses in the 7th and 8th semesters. As a result of the 2018 program update, the early childhood education undergraduate program was updated with all other pre-service teacher education programs (HEC, 2018). There were 59 courses in the updated program. With reference to the program structure, pre-service teachers were able to graduate by earning 141 national credits in return to complete 134 hours of theoretical courses and 14 hours of practical courses. The teaching practice courses remained the same, but the school experience course was removed from the program (HEC, 2006; 2018). Figure 1 shows the distribution of the course hours by area across four early childhood education undergraduate programs in Turkey.

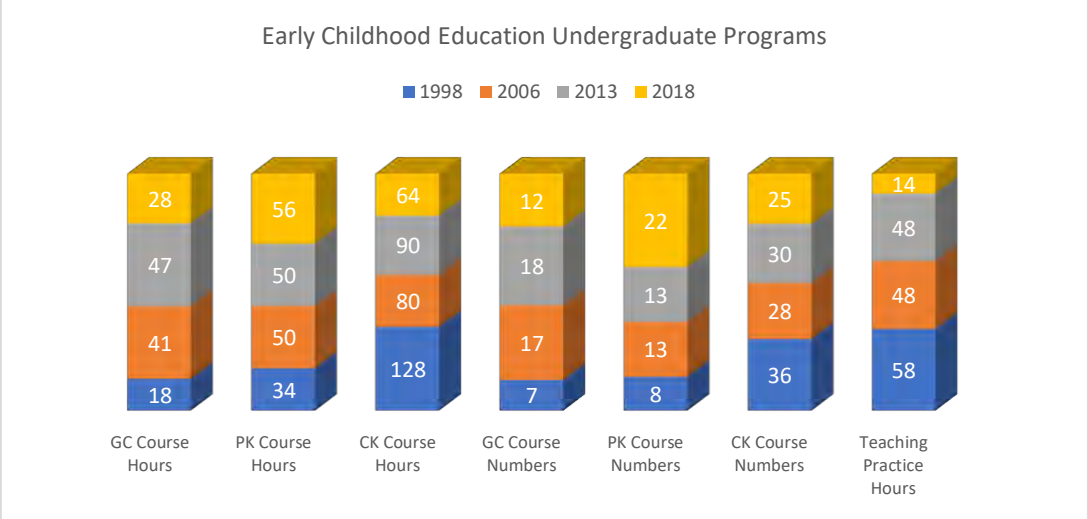

Figure 1. *The Comparison of the Course Hours at Four Early Childhood Education Undergraduate Programs*

It is evident that there has been a steady decrease in practice hours (from 58 hours to 14 hours) in early childhood education undergraduate programs over the years. Similarly, the hours and number of CK course hours decreased to the minimum in the 2018 program, while the number and hours of PK courses increased. This trend shows that the balance between theory and practice (Nahal, 2010) and content and pedagogy (Yıldırım, 2011) have diminished over the years. Considering that the changes in the number and hours of the GC/PK/CK courses and practice course hours affect the quality of education in teacher training programs, we believe that learning the opinions and needs of preservice teachers will be helpful to guide new program changes.

Teacher training programs need to undergo constant change to effectively address the needs of a changing society and be evaluated to understand whether they produce high-quality teachers. In the literature, stakeholder opinions are considered critical components in curriculum development studies (Akpınar, 2012; Brooker & Macdonald, 1999; Demirel, 2007). On the other hand, it is stated that there are disruptions in ensuring stakeholder participation in the curriculum development process in countries with a central education system like Turkey (Evin-Gencel, 2017). Another critique is that sufficient information is not shared about the opinions collected from the stakeholders in previous curriculum development studies in Turkey (Çobanoğlu & Yıldırım, 2021). The HEC (2018) acknowledged that stakeholder opinions were received during the 2018 undergraduate program revision process, but there was no methodological explanation in the program document. The present study sheds light on student perceptions to fill this gap, students being one of the key stakeholders in the curriculum development process.

Teachers' personal characteristics such as age, gender, academic achievement, and socioeconomic status constitute a different dimension of teacher quality. The literature argues that there is a relationship between teachers' demographic data and their attitudes towards the teaching profession. Tannen (2001) stated that males and females have different ways of communicating during teaching and learning. Some studies have shown that males are more talented than females in learning mathematics and science (Spelke, 2005), and gender is a debatable issue regarding math and science (Navarro, Martin, & Gomez-Arizaga, 2022). The level of professional dedication of teachers is in favor of women in some studies (Apak, 2009),

while it does not differ by gender in other studies (Kozikoğlu Özcanlı, 2020; Turhan, Demirli, & Nazik, 2012).

Significance of the Study

In Turkey, early childhood education teachers are trained through a 4-year undergraduate education program within faculties of education, similar to what is found in other teaching fields. It is essential to evaluate the effectiveness of an early childhood education undergraduate program from the perspective of preservice teachers who are taking the courses to determine the weaknesses and strengths of these programs. Regarding early childhood education undergraduate programs, the following studies can be found in the literature: studies about the views on teaching practice and the problems encountered during teaching practices (e.g., Demir & Çamlı, 2011; Duman, 2016; Karaca & Aral, 2011; Karasu-Avcı & Ünal-İbret, 2016; Ramazan & Yılmaz, 2017; Seçer, Çeliköz, & Kayılı, 2010; Yıldırım, Özyılmaz-Akamca, Ellez, Karabekmez, & Bulut-Üner, 2019; Yıldız, Ulutaş, & Demiriz, 2018); studies on specific courses such as mathematics (e.g., Dağlıoğlu, 2017; İnan, 2014), science education (e.g., Olgan, Güner, & Öztekin, 2014; Vural-Ekinci & Hamurcu, 2008), educational philosophy (e.g., Metin-Aslan, 2014), music (e.g., Müezzinoğlu & Mirillo, 2017; Özgül, 2017), and studies on curriculums in general (e.g., Dereobalı & Ünver, 2009; Ramazan & Tunçeli, 2016; Şahin, Kartal, & İmamoğlu, 2013; Tican Başaran & Aykaç, 2020).

Some studies still present a need for further research about students' views on teacher training programs. For instance, Parylo, Süngü, and Ilgan (2015) noted that more research is required regarding the impact of university courses on preservice teachers' attitudes toward the teaching profession. Yıldırım (2011) argued that research on teacher education is limited and that there is a need for comprehensive studies in this area to guide the reconstruction of teacher training programs. In the present study, unlike many previous studies, the data were not collected from one teacher training program; rather, 35 early childhood teacher training programs in Turkey were involved in the data collection process. Moreover, at the time of the data collection, a new early childhood education undergraduate program was introduced by the HEC (2018), and it was put into action in Fall 2018. However, the participants in this study, fourth-grade preservice teachers, took courses in programs offered in 2006/2013. Therefore, the current study provides a good opportunity to evaluate whether the concerns of preservice teachers who underwent the old program courses had been addressed in the more recent 2018 program structure. In addition, the results are likely to be helpful for early childhood undergraduate departments that will update their programs after the HEC's authority transfer in 2020 to universities (HEC, 2020). Finally, most of the studies mentioned above are qualitative and do not allow for generalizations. Existing quantitative studies often examine students' opinions from a single university or from two to three schools. In this study, however, nationwide representative data were obtained and analyzed. Yazçayır and Yıldırım (2021) stressed that GC and CK courses should be analyzed comparatively. In this regard, courses in the early childhood education undergraduate program were analyzed as a whole and listed in order of importance within their groups. There was also an attempt to reveal the opinions of preservice teachers objectively. To address this, the following questions were asked and answered:

1. How do early childhood preservice teachers perceive the importance of GC, PK, and CK courses for their professional development?

2. Do the preservice teachers' perceptions regarding the importance of GC, PK, and CK courses vary by gender, academic achievement, and type of high school?

Method

This survey study is a part of mixed-method research. Survey studies are helpful to obtain the opinions of participants about a problem/issue or their knowledge, abilities, and attitudes (Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2012). In this study, fourth-year preservice teachers' opinions about the usefulness of the courses they took were obtained. In the study, the scaling methodology, based on rank-order judgments, was used to obtain the decision-maker's decisions. For scaling based on ordering judgments, the situation or feature to be measured is ranked from the highest to lowest or lowest to highest in reference to a predetermined feature (Turgut & Baykul, 1992). In this method, the observers performing the ordering consider the situation or feature as a whole, compare each situation and feature with others, and provide a numbered rank. In this way, the situation or feature is converted into a composite standard against which each situation or feature is compared. Scaling values are obtained by comparing the numbers given to each situation or feature with this composite standard (Turgut & Baykul, 1992).

Sample

The population of this research consists of 4,846 fourth-grade preservice teachers studying early childhood education at public universities in Turkey during the 2018-2019 academic year. A two-stage random sampling strategy was employed. In the first stage, a cluster random sampling method was used as the sampling method. In the cluster random sampling method, groups rather than individuals are randomly selected; this is convenient when random selection of individuals is not feasible (Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2012). In this regard, 35 universities were randomly selected as clusters from 56 state universities with early childhood education undergraduate programs from 12 regions according to the Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics (NUTS) I of TURKSTAT. Since the observation unit was preservice teachers, in the second stage, a random sampling method was used to reach the fourth-grade preservice teachers. The data gathering tools were delivered in electronic form and class environment to the 4th-grade preservice teachers with the help of their heads of department. Feedback was provided from 858 of 2,529 preservice teachers studying in the 35 universities (33.9% response rate); however, 432 (17% response rate overall) were used for data analysis after a data cleaning process. Almost half of the data were not used due to missing data or because the data extracted were not from 4th-grade preservice teachers. Table 1 shows the demographical data of these preservice teachers whose data was used.

Table 1. *Demographical Data of Participants*

		Frequency	*Percent*
Gender	Male	54	12.5
	Female	378	87.5
Academic Achievement	High (3.00 and above)	303	70.14
	Low (2.99 and below)	129	29.86
High School Type	General High School	284	65.74
	Vocational High School	148	34.26
Total		432	100

Early childhood education is a field of teaching in which females are more significant in number, and 87.5% of the participants in this study are female pre-service teachers. In general, the academic achievement of the participants is high. In terms of the high school type, most of the participants were high school graduates. The participating pre-service teachers' average age was 22 years and three months. Figure 2 shows the distribution of the 432 pre-service teachers by universities.

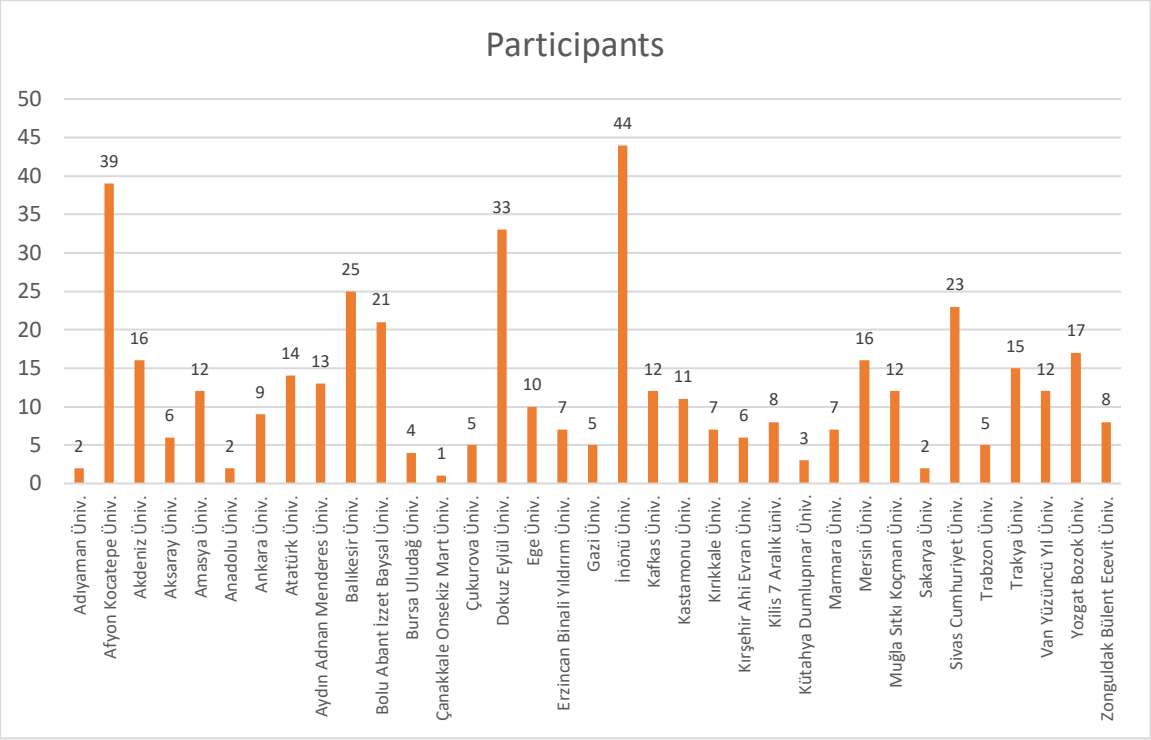

Figure 2. *Distribution of the Sample by Universities*

The participants mostly attended İnönü University, Afyon Kocatepe University, and Dokuz Eylül University, while the participation rate was the lowest for Çanakkale 18 Mart University, Adıyaman University, Anadolu University, and Sakarya University in the study. Seventy-four out of 432 preservice teachers studied in 9 universities that opened after 2000, while the rest of the preservice teachers were studying in universities that opened earlier.

Data Collection Tool

The Early Childhood Education Undergraduate Program Course Evaluation Form, developed by the researchers, was used as the data collection tool. The form consists of 20 questions in total: 8 questions on demographical characteristics, three questions on the ordering/ranking of GC, PK, and CK courses (including all the courses in the program), 4 questions about the specification of some features (e.g., a course should be in the program or a course should be removed from the program) about the courses, and five open-ended questions allowing participants to write their reasons. The form was sent to 5 experts who have doctoral degrees in early childhood education to gather their opinions on content validity. According to the views of the experts, no changes were made in the course ranking section. Still, additions were made to the demographic information section, and terminology changes were made to the open-ended questions. Afterward, the data collection process was initiated.

Data Collection Process

Ethics Committee approval was obtained on April 17, 2018, with decision No. 973 from the university affiliated with the researchers. However, the data collection was carried out between April-June 2019 due to issues related to the online data gathering tool. In the process, an online link was sent by e-mail to the heads of the early childhood education departments. In addition, a printed data gathering form was sent to 2 universities upon their request. Preservice teachers were asked to rank their favorite courses among GC, PK, and CK courses separately, starting from the 1st rank. In addition, the open-ended questions were obtained but not used in the current study.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using the scaling method based on rank-order judgments. In the analysis, the pairwise comparison method was used in full order, and the calculations were made over the fifth situation equation, the third situation equation, and the full data matrix. In the first stage of the analysis, the rank frequencies matrix, which shows how many times the courses given under three different groups were placed by the preservice teachers, was created separately. The *n* (*Sji* > *Ski*) frequencies matrix was calculated with the help of the *n* (*Sji* > *Ski*) = fji.(fk < i+1/2.fki) equation for each rank frequency in the Ordinal Frequencies matrix (Turgut & Baykul, 1992). These matrices were then divided by the column sums for each frequency matrix by *N2* = 432, and by substituting the relevant elements of the matrix, the ratio matrix (*P* Matrix) was then obtained. Following this, the *z* values in the unit normal distribution corresponding to each element in the ratio matrix were collected, and the unit normal deviations matrix *(zjk*) was found. In the bottom row of the unit deviation matrix, the values of each column were summed up, and the mean of each z value in this column across the columns was calculated to obtain the scale values (*Sj*) of each course. The minimum scale value is added to all scale values to make the minimum scale value equal to zero. As a result, all scale values (*Sc*) are reduced to an equally ranged linear dimension with a starting point of zero (Kara & Gelbal, 2013). The scale values of three courses for each independent variable category (gender, academic achievement, and high school type) were calculated separately.

Before interpreting the scaling findings, it is necessary to calculate whether they meet assumptions and internal consistency (Turgut & Baykul, 1992). Therefore, the error value was calculated, and its significance was tested with chi-square statistics. As a result of the analysis, the average error value was calculated as 0.00611 for GC courses, 0.01663 for PK courses, and 0.04663 for CK courses. The chi-square value calculated for the average error value was calculated as [χ^2 (*df* = 28, *n* = 432) = 4.396, *p* < .05] and the table value [χ^2 (*df* = 28, *n* = 432) = 41.337, *p* < .05] for GC courses; as [χ^2 (*df* =55, *n* = 432) = 67.835, *p* <.05] the table value [χ^2 (*df* = 55, *n* = 432) = 73.311, *p* <.05] for PK courses; as [χ^2 (*df* = 253, *n* = 432) = 1686.559, *p* <.05] and the table value was [χ^2 (*df* = 253, *n* = 432) = 291.101, *p* <.05] for CK courses. It was observed that the calculated chi-square value did not exceed the table value for the GC and PK courses for the 0.05 significance level and 28 and 55 degrees of freedom. However, it was also observed that the calculated chi-square value for the CK courses exceeded the table value for 253 degrees of freedom. According to these findings, the data, which is the basis for scaling, meet the assumptions of the 5th situation for the GC and PK courses. For the CK courses, scaling was made using the 3rd situation equation. These findings showed that internal consistency was achieved, and assumptions were met; they also validated the suitability of the scaling process.

After internal consistency was tested, scaling was first performed for the observers in the entire study group to cover each course cluster; then, by carrying out separate procedures for the independent variables of gender, academic achievement, and school type, scale values were calculated for each course cluster as well. The scale values are shown in tables and figures on an evenly ranged scale, allowing for the visual comparison of the significance levels of the features. In addition, the Spearman Rank Differences Correlation Coefficient was calculated to determine whether the courses differed in their ranking according to the scale values of courses based on the independent variables.

Results

In this part of the study, the course rankings of the fourth-grade preservice teachers enrolled in early childhood education programs during the 2018-2019 academic year are presented under the first subheading, followed by findings on whether these rankings differ by gender, academic achievement, and type of high school graduated from under the second subheading.

Perceptions of Early Childhood Preservice Teachers Regarding the Importance Of GC, PK, and CK Courses for Their Professional Development.

The data linked to the 432 preservice teachers, who ranked the courses in terms of their significance, were scaled in full order with the pairwise comparisons method. Table 2 and Figure 3 show the findings of each course's scale value and order of significance according to the rank ordering requested from the preservice teachers.

Table 2. *Scale Values Based on Ranking Judgments on GC Courses*

Courses	*Sj*	*Sc*	*Rank*
Computers I	0.042	0.421	5
Computers II	-0.184	0.196	8
Educational Philosophy	0.119	0.499	3
Educational Sociology	0.120	0.500	2
Turkish Education History	-0.062	0.318	6
Statistics	-0.380	0.000	9
Effective Communication	0.397	0.777	1
Research Methods	-0.112	0.268	7
Community Service	0.060	0.440	4

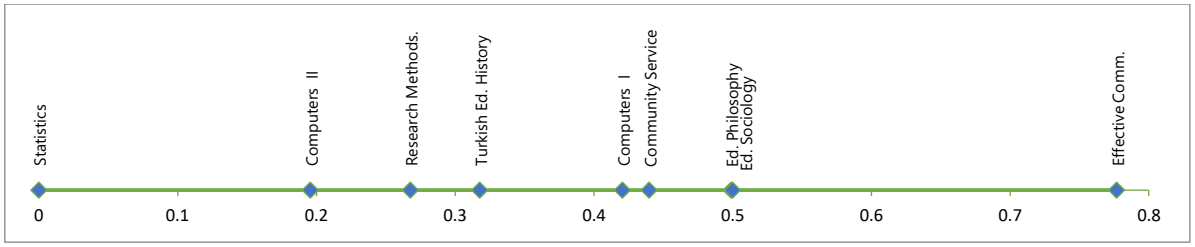

Figure 3. *Representation of Ranking Judgments Scale Values of GC Courses on a Range Scale*

Table 2 shows the courses in the order of the semester, and the last column shows the ranking of GC courses based on preservice teachers' perceptions of usefulness for their professional development. Figure 3, on the other hand, shows the order of the courses on an evenly ranged scale, and Effective Communication was found to be the most beneficial GC course by all preservice teachers by far. However, the Statistics course was considered the least helpful lesson by far. The remaining seven courses were close to each other on an evenly

ranged scale; the Educational Sociology and Educational Philosophy courses were the nearest courses to Effective Communication in terms of rank. The Computers II and Research Methods courses took 2nd and 3rd place after the Statistics course among the courses considered the least beneficial.

Table 3 and Figure 4 show the findings related to scale value and significance order for each PK course.

Table 3. *Scale Values Based on Ranking Judgments on PK Courses*

Courses	*Sj*	*Sc*	*Rank*
Introduction to Educational Sciences	-0.015	0.607	8
Educational Psychology	0.119	0.740	5
Teaching Principles and Methods	0.156	0.778	4
Instructional Technologies and Material Design	-0.115	0.507	9
Classroom Management	0.020	0.642	6
Special Teaching Methods	0.018	0.640	7
School Experience	0.328	0.950	2
Special Education	-0.278	0.343	10
Assessment and Evaluation	-0.622	0.000	12
Guidance	-0.373	0.249	11
Teaching Practice I	0.453	1.075	1
Teaching Practice II	0.308	0.930	3

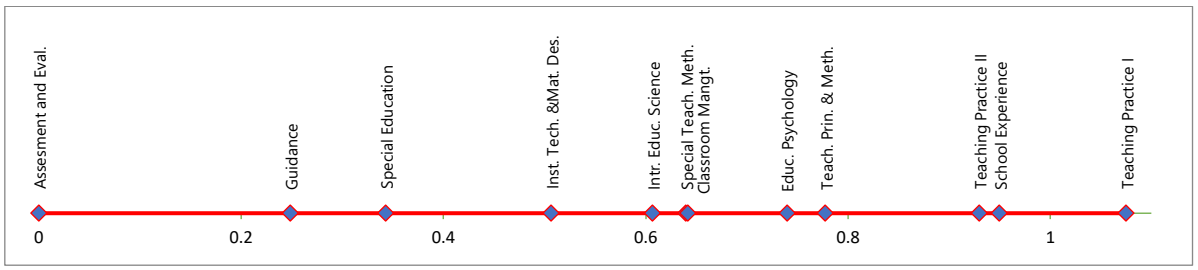

Figure 4. *Representation of Ranking Judgments Scale Values of GC Courses on a Range Scale*

In Table 3, although the PK courses are listed according to semesters, in the last column, the ranking of the courses by the candidate teachers was given according to the order of usefulness; Figure 4 shows the order on the evenly ranged scale. In the opinion of the preservice teachers, Teaching Practice I was the most helpful course compared to the other courses, including the two other practice courses. In contrast, the Assessment and Evaluation course was perceived as the least beneficial course by far. Among the remaining courses, the School Experience and Teaching Practice II courses were evaluated as the 2nd and 3rd most valuable courses with similar results. On the other hand, the Guidance and Special Education courses share the 2nd and 3rd places among the least beneficial courses, and the remaining teacher education courses are positioned at a similar distance.

Table 4 and Figure 5 show the findings related to scale value and significance order for CK in each course.

Table 4. *Scale Values Based on Ranking Judgments on CK Courses*

Courses	*Sj*	*Sc*	*Rank*
Introduction to Early Childhood Education	1.500	3.468	1
Human Anatomy and Physiology	-0.307	1.661	16
Psychology	0.892	2.860	3
Maternal-Child Health and First Aid	0.764	2.732	5
Maternal-Child Nutrition	0.545	2.513	8
Early Childhood Development I	1.374	3.342	2
Creativity and Development	0.603	2.571	7
Play Development of Child	0.655	2.623	6
Early Childhood Development II	0.778	2.746	4
Children's Literature	0.139	2.107	12
Mathematics Education	0.276	2.244	9
Children's Mental Health	0.266	2.234	11
Drama	0.273	2.241	10
Physical Education and Game Teaching	-0.164	1.804	14
Music Education I	-0.224	1.744	15
Science Education	-0.156	1.812	13
Visual Arts Education	-0.421	1.547	18
Special Teaching Methods II	-0.379	1.589	17
Music Education II	-0.581	1.387	20
Material Development	-0.657	1.311	21
Parent Education	-0.512	1.456	19
Research Project I	-1.327	0.641	22
Research Project II	-1.968	0.000	24
Primary Ed. Prep. and Primary Ed. Programs	-1.370	0.598	23

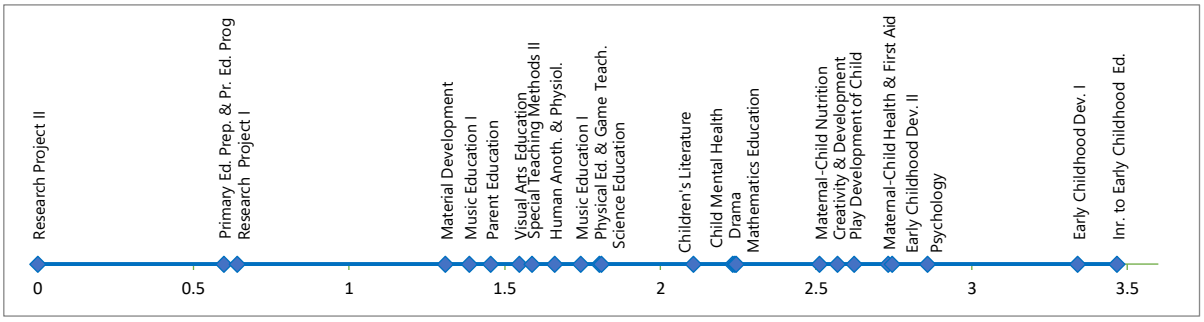

Figure 5. *Representation of Ranking Judgments Scale Values of FE Courses on a Range Scale*

Concerning Table 4 and Figure 5, the most beneficial CK courses are Introduction to Early Childhood Education and Early Childhood Development I courses, respectively. The Psychology course ranks third. The Research Project II course was evaluated as the least beneficial course by far. According to Figure 5, CK courses were gathered into five groups regarding their rank scores. In the first group, there are the top two beneficial courses; the second group includes six courses such as Psychology, Early Childhood Education, and Development I; the upper middle group is next with four courses such as Children's Literature and Mathematics Education; the lower middle group includes nine courses, including Parent Education, Science Education, Music Education I-II; the remaining group is made up of the least beneficial courses, namely Research Project I-II, Primary Education Preparation, and Primary Education Programs.

Perceptions of Early Childhood Preservice Teachers Regarding the Importance of GC, PK, And CK Courses by Gender, Academic Achievement, and Type of High School.

Table 5 shows the findings related to scale value and order of significance of GC courses for the independent variables of gender, academic achievement, and school type.

Table 5. *Scale Values Obtained for Gender, Academic Achievement, and Type of High School for the GC Courses*

Courses	*Female*		*Male*		*2.99<*		*3.00=>*		*General*		*Vocational*	
	Sc	R	Sc	R	Sc	R	Sc	R	Sc	R	Sc	R
Effective Communication	0.809	1	0.552	1	0.680	1	0.818	1	0.667	1	0.985	1
Educational Philosophy	0.508	2	0.440	3	0.443	3	0.524	2	0.439	3	0.606	2
Educational Sociology	0.498	3	0.514	2	0.483	2	0.508	3	0.441	2	0.604	3
Community Service	0.458	4	0.318	5	0.346	4	0.481	4	0.363	5	0.596	4
Computers I	0.429	5	0.371	4	0.341	5	0.456	5	0.379	4	0.507	5
Turkish Education History	0.334	6	0.203	6	0.326	6	0.314	7	0.221	6	0.499	6
Research Methods	0.283	7	0.166	7	0.136	8	0.325	6	0.206	7	0.394	7
Computers II	0.208	8	0.113	8	0.140	7	0.221	8	0.146	8	0.295	8
Statistics	0.000	9	0.000	9	0.000	9	0.000	9	0.000	9	0.000	9

The consistency between the scale values was examined to test whether the independent variables affect the GC course rankings of the preservice teachers; the Spearman Rank Differences Correlation Coefficient was then calculated, and the values showed that for gender (rs = 0.967; p <0.01), academic achievement (rs = 0.933; p <0.01), and high school type (rs = 0.967; p <0.01), there was a high consistency among scale values. Therefore, it can be concluded that preservice teachers' gender, academic achievement, and high school type do not affect their ranking in the GC courses. As in Table 2, Effective Communication takes the first place as the most beneficial lesson in all groups, regardless of gender, academic achievement, or high school type. Once again, regardless of gender, grade, and type of school, Statistics was ranked as the least beneficial course. Educational philosophy and Educational Sociology courses seem to have changed places in some groups, but this is not a statistically significant difference.

Table 6 shows the findings of the scale value and order of significance of the PK courses for the independent variables of gender, academic achievement, and school type.

Table 6. *Scale Values Obtained for Gender, Academic Achievement, and Type of High School for the PK Courses*

Courses	*Female*		*Male*		*2.99<*		*3.00=>*		*General*		*Vocational*	
	Sc	R	Sc	R	Sc	R	Sc	R	Sc	R	Sc	R
Teaching Practice I	1.115	1	0.811	2	0.911	1	1.147	1	1.058	1	1.123	1
School Experience	0.964	2	0.855	1	0.812	2	1.011	2	0.931	2	0.994	2
Teaching Practice II	0.964	3	0.702	5	0.763	3	1.004	3	0.908	3	0.962	3
Teach. Prin. and Meth.	0.789	4	0.708	4	0.710	4	0.809	4	0.739	4	0.848	4
Educational Psychology	0.759	5	0.617	6	0.652	5	0.780	5	0.709	5	0.802	5
Special Teach. Methods	0.658	6	0.520	8	0.521	8	0.693	6	0.602	6	0.727	7
Classroom Mgmt.	0.648	7	0.601	7	0.582	7	0.669	7	0.597	7	0.728	6
Intr. to Educ. Science	0.592	8	0.719	3	0.590	6	0.616	8	0.558	8	0.696	8
Inst. Tech. & Mat. Dev.	0.515	9	0.453	9	0.465	9	0.526	9	0.525	9	0.474	9

Table 6. *(Cont.)*

Special Education	0.359	10	0.236	10	0.210	10	0.401	10	0.327	10	0.379	10
Guidance	0.276	11	0.055	11	0.178	11	0.280	11	0.203	11	0.333	11
Assmt. & Evaluation	0.000	12	0.000	12	0.000	12	0.000	12	0.000	12	0.000	12

The results for the PK courses showed that there was a high consistency among scale values for gender (rs = 0.874; p <0.01), academic achievement (rs = 0.972; p <0.01), and for high school type (rs = 0.993; p <0.01). Therefore, as with the results for the GC courses, there is no significant influence of gender, academic achievement, and type of high school on the ranking of the TP courses. The Practice I course remained the most useful course except for male preservice teachers' preference. On the other hand, Instructional Technologies and Material Design, Special Education, Guidance and Assessment, and Evaluation courses kept their rank in the bottom four places as the least beneficial courses. Table 6 shows that male preservice teachers' rankings differ compared to other groups but not in a statistically significant sense.

Table 7 shows the findings related to CK course rankings for the independent variables of gender, academic achievement, and school type.

Table 7. *Scale Values Obtained for Gender, Academic Achievement, and Type of High School for the CK Courses*

Courses	*Female*		*Male*		*2.99<*		*3.00=>*		*General*		*Vocational*	
	Sc	*S*	*Sc*	*S*	*Sc*	*S*	*Sc*	*S*	*Sc*	*S*	*Sc*	*S*
Intro. to Early Childhood Ed.	3.350	1	4.337	1	4.054	1	3.236	2	3.462	2	3.444	1
Early Childhood Dev. I	3.349	2	3.290	3	3.494	2	3.279	1	3.552	1	2.953	2
Psychology	2.771	3	3.459	2	3.364	3	2.651	4	2.997	3	2.587	3
Early Childhood Dev. II	2.752	4	2.672	8	2.966	6	2.657	3	2.835	5	2.555	4
Mater. Child Health & F. Aid	2.699	5	3.159	4	3.209	4	2.534	5	2.859	4	2.500	6
Play Dev. of Child	2.609	6	2.702	7	2.933	7	2.497	6	2.659	6	2.548	5
Creativity & Development	2.539	7	2.727	6	2.875	8	2.445	7	2.657	7	2.394	7
Maternal-Child Nutrition	2.453	8	2.874	5	2.985	5	2.309	8	2.604	8	2.343	8
Drama	2.233	9	2.311	13	2.567	9	2.113	11	2.323	10	2.096	10
Mathematics Education	2.225	10	2.350	11	2.533	10	2.127	10	2.318	11	2.110	9
Children's Mental Health	2.206	11	2.388	10	2.474	11	2.135	9	2.374	9	1.959	12
Children's Literature	2.071	12	2.325	12	2.455	12	1.966	12	2.180	12	1.970	11
Science Education	1.781	13	2.009	15	2.124	14	1.685	14	1.892	13	1.667	13
Physical Ed. & Game Teach.	1.768	14	2.032	14	2.086	15	1.690	13	1.878	14	1.665	14
Music Education I	1.711	15	1.952	16	2.030	16	1.628	15	1.804	15	1.629	15
Special Teaching Meth. II	1.543	16	1.890	17	1.781	18	1.517	16	1.654	17	1.476	17
Human Anat. and Physiol.	1.530	17	2.655	9	2.284	13	1.415	18	1.752	16	1.495	16
Visual Arts Education	1.517	18	1.734	18	1.861	17	1.419	17	1.609	18	1.437	18
Parent Education	1.432	19	1.607	19	1.651	20	1.381	19	1.550	19	1.294	19
Music Education II	1.363	20	1.527	21	1.659	19	1.277	20	1.450	20	1.269	20
Material Development	1.269	21	1.581	20	1.611	21	1.191	21	1.415	21	1.122	21
Research Project I	0.611	22	0.826	22	0.856	22	0.556	22	0.707	22	0.522	22
Pr. Ed. Prep. & Pr. Ed. Prog.	0.573	23	0.642	23	0.764	23	0.502	23	0.694	23	0.402	23
Research Project II	0.000	24	0.000	24	0.000	24	0.000	24	0.000	24	0.000	24

The Spearman Rank Differences Correlation Coefficient showed that the values for gender (rs = 0.948; p <0.01), academic achievement (rs = 0.970; p <0.01), and high school type (rs = 0.990; p <0.01) had a high consistency among scale values for the CK courses. Therefore, it can be said that gender, academic achievement, and type of school do not affect the ranking of the CK courses. Regardless of gender, grade point average, and high school type, Introduction to Early Childhood Education and Early Childhood Development I were the top two selections of the preservice teachers. At the same time, Research Project I, Preparation for Primary

Education and Primary Education Programs, and Research Project II courses constituted the last three rows in terms of ranking.

Discussion

In this study, the views of early childhood preservice teachers regarding the usefulness of the courses they took in their programs for their professional development were investigated.

The Effective Communication course was clearly ranked first among the GC courses concerning the study's findings. Communication skills, a key asset in the 21st century (Ananiadou & Claro, 2009; Saavedra & Opfer, 2012; Voogt & Pareja Roblin, 2010), was also included in the MoNE Teacher Competencies as an essential competence that a teacher should have (MoNE, 2017). The rankings of the preservice teachers clearly show that preservice teachers value this course and have sufficient awareness of its necessity and importance. Ekinci and Kaya (2016) found that early childhood preservice teachers perceive communication, creativity, and aesthetics as critical aspects of teacher competency. Similarly, Şahin et al. (2013) found that Computers, Effective Communication, and History of Atatürk and Revolutions courses were the three most effective courses. On the other hand, in the 2018 undergraduate program, the Effective Communication course was removed from the compulsory course pool and replaced with a selective course pool under the name Human Relations and Communication. Based on the results of this study, it may be necessary to reconsider whether this course should be offered as a mandatory course in teacher training programs.

The results showed that the Statistics course took the last place by far among GC courses. In a study conducted with mathematics preservice teachers, it was observed that the Statistics course was not favored very much by candidates because they had difficulty comprehending the subjects (Aydın & Sevimli, 2019). In a qualitative study conducted with primary school pre-service mathematics teachers, the participants did not view the Research Methods course as necessary in the undergraduate program (Akgün, 2012). Considering the current study results and other similar studies, since these courses do not have content specific to early childhood education or the relevant program, they may be evaluated as useless by preservice teachers. If the content of these courses was related to the students' field who took the classes, their perceptions of these courses might change. It may also be necessary for the instructors of these courses to clearly explain why it is essential for preservice teachers to learn statistics and research methods and how these courses may benefit students in their future roles as teachers and school administrators. The Community Service course, the only course containing practical content among the general culture courses, ranked 4th in the entire group and all subgroups except in terms of male pre-service teacher choice. There are contrasting views regarding female-male teacher perceptions towards this course. Yılmaz and Arslan (2016) found that female preservice teachers have more positive perceptions of the Community Service course. Still, Elma, Kesten, Kıroğlu, Uzun and Dicle (2010) found that gender was not a statistically significant variable regarding the preservice teachers' perception of the Community Service course. The current study found no statistical difference between male and female preservice teachers, although the ranking was lower (5th vs. 4th) for the male preservice teachers. Given these inconsistent findings in the literature, the differences between the perceptions of male and female preservice teachers about teacher education courses and the sources of the differences - if there are any - should be studied further in future research.

Preservice teachers should have reliable pedagogical knowledge, as well as content awareness and an understanding of general culture (Küçükahmet, 1986; Shulman, 1987). In the current study, the Teaching Practice I, School Experience, and Teaching Practice II courses were ranked the top 3 most beneficial PK courses. Similarly, Şahin et al. (2013) found that early childhood education preservice teachers ranked Teaching Practice I-II and School Experience as the three most effective teacher education courses. The results of the current study and the literature indicate that early childhood preservice teachers have a clear preference for the courses that are more closely related to practice in pedagogical knowledge. On the other hand, starting from 1998, there has been a steady decrease in teaching practice hours in early childhood undergraduate programs in Turkey. Both preservice teachers and academicians previously emphasized this problem (Ulubey & Tican Başaran, 2019). In one study, preservice teachers stress the inadequacy of the hours of teaching practice courses in their undergraduate program (Yıldız-Altan, Ulutaş, & Demiriz, 2018). Furthermore, academicians in early childhood education criticized the 2018 ECE undergraduate program's decreased practice hours for most of the courses and removal of the School Experience course from the program (Tican Başaran & Aykaç, 2020). The quality of these courses is yet another concern, as studies found that the content and implementation of these courses need to be improved (Aslan & Sağlam, 2018; Şimşek, Alkan, & Erdem, 2013; Tonga & Tantekin-Erden, 2021). In this regard, it is essential to point out that early childhood departments that will renew their undergraduate programs may consider increasing practice-based pedagogical content courses in their curriculum and offering better and additional practice hours for their students.

In this study, Assessment and Evaluation, Guidance, and Special Education courses were ranked lowest in beneficial courses. Similarly, Yalçın and Şengül Avşar (2014) found that Special Education and Assessment and Evaluation courses were found to be in the lower rankings in terms of their significance for preservice teachers. Assessment and evaluation are important content that may help teachers adapt curriculum and instructional approaches to students' needs and determine the overall effectiveness of programs and classroom practices; guidance courses may help teachers support children's developmental needs to achieve complete development and life-long learning. On the other hand, the Special Education course is another crucial course that needs to be included in every PK and CK course as sub-content rather than as a limited and standalone course. The reason why preservice teachers do not perceive these courses as useful may be explained differently. One explanation may be that these three essential PK courses are not offered beneficially in teacher training programs. This may be because their departments may not have a sufficient number of academic staff specialized in these areas, and unqualified instructors offer these courses. Also, there may be a need to differentiate the content of these courses for early childhood education as preservice teachers may have difficulty making connections between the course content and their study area. In which semester these courses are offered in teacher education programs may also be a factor influencing preservice teachers' perceptions of the significance of courses. For example, in the 2018 program, the Special Education and Mainstreaming course was offered in the last semester, and two different content types were merged into a limited 2-hour course without any opportunity for practice. It may be more effective to present this crucial content to preservice teachers in previous semesters and allow them to practice so that preservice teachers acquire core knowledge before starting their classroom practicum.

In the category of CK courses, the Introduction to Early Childhood Education course was ranked first and the Early Childhood Development and Education I course was ranked second.

These courses, in which preservice teachers begin learning about their profession, are important for them to develop positive attitudes toward early childhood education. Similarly, in Bartan's (2019) study, early childhood preservice teachers stated that, during their practicums, introduction to early childhood education and early childhood development courses were the courses they benefitted from most in the whole undergraduate education program. On the other hand, in Şahin et al.'s (2013) study, these courses had middle ranks, whereas the Drama, Mother-Child Health and First Aid, and Music courses were found in the upper ranks. However, it must be noted that this study was conducted only in a single university, and the results may be attributed to the specific context of the university observed. The literature indicates that how lecturers implement a course dramatically affects the success of any course (Dereobalı & Ünver, 2009; Peker Ünal, 2017; Üstün, Erkan, & Akman, 2004). The results of the studies carried out in a single university may largely be influenced by how preservice teachers perceive the academic personnel of that institution; therefore, the results of such studies should be interpreted carefully.

The findings obtained from the current research suggest that preservice teachers benefit from such intro courses in the program; therefore, during program revision processes, the intensity of these courses should be maintained and even increased according to the HEC authority transfer decision of 2020 (HEC, 2020). Different from other studies in the literature, the Psychology course ranked in 3rd place in terms of usefulness leaving the Early Childhood Development II course behind among the CK courses. However, in Bartan's (2019) study, the Psychology course was found to be among the courses considered inefficient in terms of professional preparation and content according to preservice teachers. Similarly, Şahin et al. (2013) found that the Psychology course came in 9th place in terms of its benefits for the profession among the CK courses. The Psychology course in the early childhood education undergraduate program included topics such as philosophical foundations of psychology, child psychology, sub-branches of psychology, developmental psychology, and learning psychology. In the 2018 program, this course was removed from the program, but it can be considered beneficial and added to programs again because preservice teachers acquire some essential information through the course.

In relation to CK courses, the least beneficial courses were the Research Project I-II courses and the Preparation for Primary Education and Primary Education Programs course. In the literature, there are contrasting results regarding the usefulness of the research project courses. In some studies, preservice teachers stated that the Research Project course was a waste of time and included unnecessary topics (Bartan, 2019; Cengiz & Karataş, 2014), but in another study, the preservice teachers found this course necessary because it allowed them to follow the developments in the field more closely and acquire knowledge about research methods (Ersoy & Çengelci, 2008). Additional studies found preservice teachers had both positive and negative perceptions of these courses (Eti & Gündoğdu, 2016; Şahin et al. 2013). Considering the entire catalog of CK courses, it could be interpreted that these courses are not perceived as courses that prepare future teachers for the teaching profession; conversely, preservice teachers would rather learn drama, science, or math content to instruct children. To this end, in the 2018 program, the Research Project I-II courses were excluded. Another interesting finding of the study is that, compared to other studies in the literature (Bartan, 2019; Dereobalı & Ünver, 2009; İnce, 2019; Şahin et al., 2013), the Human Anatomy and Physiology course was not ranked in the bottom. This result might be because a sample from different universities was involved in the current study, which is likely to eliminate lecturer bias, as discussed

previously. However, the course was removed from the 2018 program. This finding shows that curriculum development or revision processes need careful planning and execution and consideration of broader participation of preservice teachers in the decision-making regarding course inclusions/exclusions.

Regarding the second research question of the study, the opinions of preservice teachers did not change regarding gender, academic achievement, and the type of high school they had graduated from. The literature is very limited regarding the influence of demographical characteristics on the views regarding the significance of the courses. However, in a study, which used a similar methodology, Yalçın and Şengül Avşar (2014) found that the rankings of CK courses differed in terms of gender. Although the current study's findings reveal small differences, they are not statistically significant. Therefore, there is a need for future research on the sources of preservice teachers' perceptions regarding the importance of courses in teacher education programs. This study falls short in explaining why some courses are perceived as important and some are viewed as less critical.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study examined fourth-year early childhood preservice teachers' opinions regarding the usefulness of the courses they took in their teacher training programs. In this context, we believe that the results obtained from 432 preservice teachers from 35 universities could be a guideline for policymakers and curriculum development processes of universities.

The opinions of preservice teachers, who are among the most critical stakeholders in the program development process, should be reflected in the program development/revision process (Kahramanoğlu, 2017). In this regard, the results of this study might have the potential to further integrate the voice of preservice teachers. The results also show that preservice teachers are more likely to value courses that are related to practice rather than focusing on theoretical courses. However, we believe that, regardless of the demographic characteristics, the preservice teachers' agreement on effective and ineffective courses could make it easier to decide which courses to exclude from the programs and which courses to maintain and strengthen in teacher education.

As in every scientific study, there are some limitations of this study, and the results should be evaluated considering these limitations. The present work included public university students, so private university students' views were not reflected. Although they were part of the PK course curriculum, the Turkish Education System and School Management courses were not included in the study as it they were compulsory in some undergraduate programs and optional in others. Scaling studies are generally conducted in the order of 8 to 10 items and, as the number of items increases, the reliability of the scaling decreases. In this study, GC (9 items) and PK (12 items) courses were scaled using fifth situation-higher accuracy, while CK (24 items) courses were scaled using third situation-lower accuracy. In this context, the margin of error may be higher for the rankings of the CK courses. For this reason, it is recommended that careful attention should be given to evaluating the rankings of this group.

Students are essential stakeholders of curriculum development studies, and this study attempted to highlight the voices of early childhood preservice teachers in terms of improving teacher education programs.

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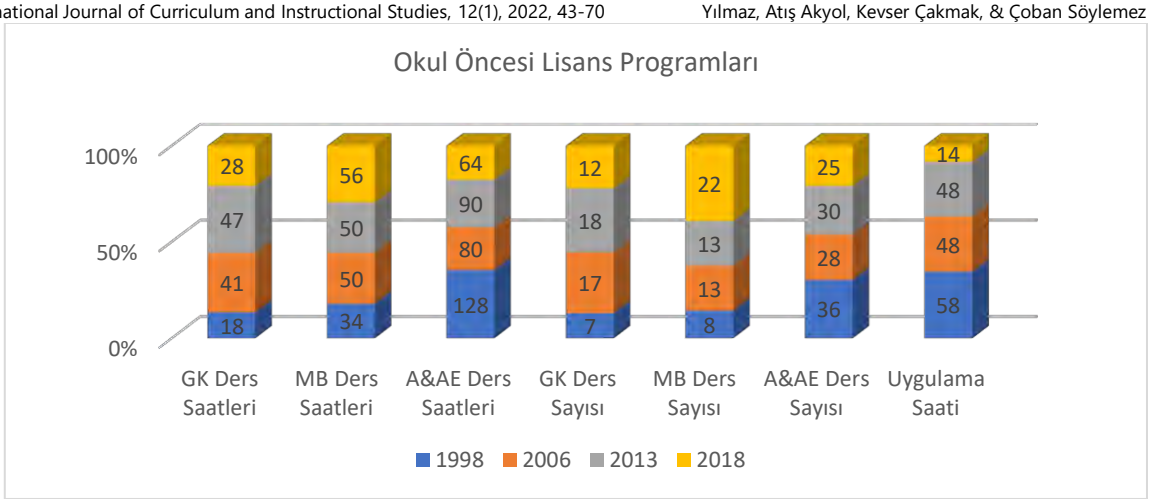
TÜRKÇE GENİŞ ÖZET

Okul Öncesi Öğretmen Adaylarının Okul Öncesi Öğretmenliği Lisans Programı Derslerine Yönelik Görüşleri

Giriş

Eğitimde verimin ve kalitenin arttırılmasındaki ana unsur öğretmendir. Bu sebeple öğretmen yetiştirme programları dikkatle ve derinlemesine ele alınmalıdır. Alan yazında öğretmen yetiştirme programlarının standartlarının yükseltilmesinin verimli ve kalifiye öğretmenler yetiştirilmesiyle doğrudan ilişkili olduğuna sıklıkla yer verilmektedir (Cochran-Smith & Zeichner, 2005; Darling-Hammond, 2006). Öğretmen yetiştirme programının niteliğini arttırmanın diğer bir önemli boyutu ise programın yapıısıdır. Farklı araştırmalar, teori ve pratiğin birbirini tamamlayacak şekilde bütünleştirilmesinin ve her iki alanı da dengeli bir şekilde yapılandırmanın önemine işaret etmektedir (Beck, Kosnik, & Rowsell, 2007; Nahal, 2010). Benzer şekilde, Darling-Hammond (2006) nitelikli öğretmen eğitimi programlarının bazı ortak özelliklerini şu şekilde tanımlamaktadır: tüm ders süreçleri ve pratik deneyimler tutarlı öğrenme deneyimi oluşturmalı ve pratik çalışmalar iyi tanımlanmış çerçeveler veya standartlar aracılığı ile yönlendirilmeli ve değerlendirilmelidir. Ayrıca Yıldırım (2011) öğretmen yetiştirme programlarının hem içerik hem de mesleki beceri içerdiğini, uygulamayı teori ile desteklediğini ve okullarla etkili iş birlikleri kurabildiğini öne sürmektedir.

Türkiye'de okul öncesi alanında öğretmen yetiştirme lise, ortaokul ve ilkokul kademelerine göre daha yeni bir alandır. İlk kez 10. Milli Eğitim Şurasında (MEB,1981) okul öncesi eğitimin yaygınlaştırılması, amaç ve görevlerinin belirlenmesi, okul öncesi programının geliştirilmesi, anasınıfı öğretmenleri için el kitapları ve hizmet içi eğitimlerin hazırlanması, çocuk-aile-programı için materyallerin geliştirilmesi, çocukların gelişimini değerlendirmeye yönelik materyallerin yaygınlaştırılması, amaç ve görevlerinin belirlenmesi, okul öncesi programının geliştirilmesi, öğretmen yetiştirme kaynaklarının değerlendirilmesine yönelik kararlar alınmıştır (MEB, 1981). 1997 yılında YÖK nezdindeki genel yapılandırma kapsamında okul öncesi öğretmen yetiştiren bölümler ve programlar ilk kez dört yıllık eğitim süresine çıkarılmış ve okul öncesi öğretmenliği bölümleri açılmıştır (YÖK Yürütme Kurulunun 04 Kasım 1997 tarih ve 97.39.2761 sayılı kararıyla). Aynı zamanda ilk lisans programı da oluşturulmuştur. Şekil 1'de okul öncesi öğretmenliği lisans programlarının günümüze kadar kullanılan dört biçimi karşılaştırmalı olarak verilmiştir.



Şekil 1. *Okul Öncesi Öğretmenliği Lisans Programlarının Karşılaştırılması*

Yıllar içinde yenilenen okul öncesi öğretmenliği lisans programlarında önemli eğilimin uygulma saatlerini azaltmak olduğu, yine alan eğitimi ders saat ve sayılarının 2018 yılı programında diğer programlarla karşılaştırıldığında en aza indirgendiği, meslek bilgisi derslerinin sayı ve saatlerinin arttığı görülmektedir. Ders saat ve sayılarının uygulama saatlerinde oluşan farklılıkların öğretmen adaylarının niteliğini etkileyen değişimler olduğu ve bu değişimlerin, öğretmen adaylarının görüş, öneri ve ihtiyaçlarını temel alarak yapılacak güncellemeler için yol gösterici olacağı düşünülmektedir.

Ülkemizde okul öncesi öğretmenleri diğer kademelerde olduğu gibi eğitim fakülteleri bünyesinde 4 yıllık lisans eğitimi ile yetiştirilmektedir. Bu nedenle okul öncesi öğretmenliği bölümü lisans ders programının etkililiğinin, programı takip eden öğretmen adaylarının kişisel fikirleri ve öznel bakış açısı ile değerlendirilmesi alanyazın için önem taşımaktadır. Önceki çalışmalardan farklı olarak bu çalışmada ulusal düzeyde kapsamlı bir veri toplama süreci gerçekleştirilmiş olup, çalışmada okul öncesi öğretmenliğinin YÖK tarafından ilk defa 1998 yılında hazırlanan, 2006 yılında ve 2013 yılında gözden geçirilen "Okul Öncesi Öğretmenliği Lisans Programında yer alan Genel Kültür (GK), Öğretmenlik Meslek Bilgisi (ÖMB) ve Alan ve Alan Eğitimi (A ve AE) derslerinin okul öncesi öğretmenliği dördüncü sınıf öğretmen adaylarının mesleki gelişimlerine ne kadar katkı sağladığının ortaya çıkarılması amaçlanmıştır. Bu bağlamda aşağıda verilen araştırma sorularına cevap aranmıştır.

1. Okul öncesi öğretmen adaylarının GK, ÖMB ve A ve AE derslerinin önemine yönelik görüşleri nasıldır?
2. Okul öncesi öğretmen adaylarının GK, ÖMB ve A ve AE derslerinin önemine yönelik görüşleri cinsiyet, akademik başarıya ve lise türüne göre değişiklik göstermekte midir?

Yöntem

Geniş ölçekli bir karma yöntem araştırmanın nicel parçası olan bu araştırma tarama çalışması olarak gerçekleştirilmiştir. Araştırmanın evrenini Türkiye'de devlet üniversitelerinde 2018-2019 eğitim öğretim yılında okul öncesi öğretmenliği programlarında okuyan 4846 4. sınıf öğretmen adayı oluşturmaktatır. Örnekleme yöntemi olarak çok aşamalı rastgele örnekleme yöntemi kullanılmıştır. İlk aşamada rastgele küme örneklem ile 35 üniversite belirlenmiş sonraki aşamada ise basit rastgele yöntem ile 2529 öğretmen adayına ulaşılmış ve 858 öğretmen adayından geri dönüş sağlanmıştır. Yapılan inceleme sonrasında çalışmada kullanılmaya uygun

432'i veri analizi için kullanılmıştır. Araştırmada veri toplama aracı olarak kullanılan "Okul Öncesi Öğretmenliği Lisans Derslerinin Değerlendirilmesi Formu" araştırmacılar tarafından geliştirilmiştir. Araştırmacıların bağlı bulunduğu üniversitenin Etik Komisyonu tarafından 17 Nisan 2018 tarihli 973 sayılı kararı ile etik kurul izni alınmasından sonra 2019 yılı Nisan- Haziran ayları içerisinde okul öncesi eğitimi anabilim dalı başkanlarına e-posta ile çevrimiçi bir bağlantı gönderilmiş veya talepleri doğrultusunda isteyen üniversitelere (2 üniversite) de basılı şekilde veri toplama formu gönderilmiştir. Öğretmen adaylarından GK, ÖMB ve A ve AE derslerinden en sevdiklerini 1. Sıradan başlayarak sıralamaları istenmiştir. Elde edilen nicel veri sıralama yargılarına dayalı ölçekleme yöntemi kullanılarak analiz edilmiştir. Bu yöntemle yapılan analizde tam sıralama halinde ikili karşılaştırmalar yöntemi kullanılmış ve hesaplamalar beşinci hal denklemi ve üçüncü hal denklemi ile tam veri matrisi üzerinden yapılmıştır.

Bulgular

Bu bölümde sırasıyla, 2018-2019 eğitim öğretim yılı okul öncesi öğretmenliği programlarında okuyan ve çalışmaya katılan son sınıf öğretmen adaylarının Genel Kültür dersleri, Öğretmenlik Meslek Bilgisi dersleri ile Alan ve Alan Eğitimi derslerinin önemine dair yapmış oldukları sıralamalara yer verilmiş ve sonrasında bu sıralamaların, cinsiyet, akademik başarı ve mezun olunan lise türüne göre farklılık gösterip göstermediğine yönelik bulgular sunulmuştur.

Öğretmen adaylarının beyanlarına göre en fazla yarar sağlayan genel kültür derslerinin sıralamasını gösteren Tablo 2'ye ve eşit aralıklı ölçek üzerindeki sıralamayı gösteren Şekil 3'e göre Etkili İletişim dersi tüm öğretmen adayları tarafından en faydalı genel kültür dersi olarak görülmektediir. İstatistik dersinin ise belirgin bir farkla en az fayda sağlanan ders olduğu görülmektedir. Öğretmen adaylarına göre en fazla yarar sağlayan Öğretmenlik Meslek Bilgisi derslerinin sıralamasını gösteren Tablo 3'e ve eşit aralıklı ölçek üzerindeki sıralamayı gösteren Şekil 4'e göre tüm öğretmen adayları tarafından Öğretmenlik Uygulaması I dersinin diğer uygulama derslerine nazaran az farkla en fazla yarar sağlayan ders olduğu, Ölçme ve Değerlendirme dersinin ise belirgin farkla en az fayda sağlayan ders olduğu değerlendirilmiştir. Öğretmen adaylarına göre en fazla yarar sağlayan Alan ve Alan Eğitimi Derslerinin sıralamasını gösteren Tablo 4 ve eşit aralıklı ölçek üzerindeki sıralamayı gösteren Şekil 5'e göre tüm öğretmen adayları tarafından en faydalı A ve AE dersleri sırasıyla Okul Öncesi Eğitime Giriş ve Erken Çocukluk Döneminde Gelişim I dersleri olduğu görülmektedir. Bu sıralamada Psikoloji dersi üçüncü sırada yer almaktadır. Araştırma Projesi II dersi ise açık ara en az fayda sağlayan ders olarak değerlendirilmiştir.

Öğretmen adayları tarafından en fazla yarar sağlayan genel kültür derslerini, cinsiyet, akademik başarı ve okul türü olmak üzere 3 ana başlık altında gösteren tablolara göre öğretmen adaylarının sıralamalarında istatistiksel olarak bir farklılık bulunmadığı ortaya çıkmıştır. Diğer taraftan, genel kültür derslerinden Etkili İletişim dersi, cinsiyet, akademik başarı ve okul türü fark etmeksizin tüm gruplarda en fazla yarar sağlayan ders olarak ilk sırada yer almaktadır. Öğretmen adaylarına göre en fazla yarar sağlayan öğretmenlik meslek bilgisi dersleri; tabloya göre genel lise mezunu adaylar, meslek lisesi mezunu adaylar, akademik not ortalaması yüksek ve düşük olan öğretmen adayları ile kadın öğretmen adayları tarafından sırasıyla Öğretmenlik Uygulaması I ve Okul Deneyimi dersi olarak belirtilmiştir. Öğretmen adaylarına göre en fazla yarar sağlayan A ve AE derslerini, cinsiyet, not ortalaması ve mezun oldukları lise türüne göre gösteren tabloya göre "Okul Öncesi Eğitime Giriş" dersi cinsiyet fark

etmeksizin tüm adaylara, düşük not ortalamasına sahip adaylara ve meslek lisesi mezun öğretmen adaylarına göre en fazla yarar sağlayan ders olarak ilk sırada yer almaktadır.

Tartışma, Sonuç ve Öneriler

Araştırma bulgularına göre Genel Kültür Dersleri kategorisinde tüm grup üzerinde yapılan ölçekleme çalışması sonucunda ilk sırada belirgin farkla Etkili İletişim dersi yer almıştır. Benzer bir çalışmada Şahin, Kartal ve İmamoğlu (2013) okul öncesi öğretmen adaylarının Bilgisayar, Etkili İletişim ve Atatürk Tarihi ve İnkılap Tarihi dersini en etkili üç ders olarak ifade ettiğini belirtmişlerdir. 21. YY beceriler arasında gösterilen iletişim becerileri (Ananiadou & Claro, 2009; Saavedra & Opfer, 2012; Voogt & Pareja Roblin, 2010) MEB öğretmenlik mesleki yeterlilikleri içinde de yer almakta ve bir öğretmenin sahip olması gereken temel bir yeterlik olarak ifade edilmektedir (MoNE, 2017). ÖMB dersleri kategorisinde tüm grup üzerinde yapılan ölçekleme çalışması sonucunda ilk sırada belirgin bir biçimde Öğretmenlik Uygulaması I dersi yer almıştır. Okul Deneyimi dersi ile Öğretmenlik Uygulaması-II dersi ise ikinci ve üçüncü sırada yer almışlardır. Benzer bir çalışmada Şahin, Kartal ve İmamoğlu (2013) okul öncesi öğretmen adaylarının Öğretmenlik Uygulaması I-II ve okul deneyimini en etkili üç meslek bilgisi dersi olarak ifade ettiğini belirtmişlerdir. A ve AE dersleri kategorisinde tüm grup üzerinde yapılan ölçekleme çalışması sonucunda ilk sırada Okul Öncesi Eğitime Giriş dersi, hemen arkasından ikinci sırada ise Erken Çocukluk Gelişimi ve Eğitimi I dersi yer almaktadır. Bu dersler okul öncesi öğretmen adaylarının mesleğe giriş yaptığı ilk dönemlerde verilen dersler olup adayların okul öncesine yönelik olumlu tutum geliştirmesi için önemli bir role sahiptir. Bartan'ın (2019) çalışmasında, okul öncesi öğretmen adayları öğretmenlik uygulaması dersi esnasındaki uygulamalarında lisans eğitimi süresince aldıkları dersler içerisinde en fazla yararlandıkları alan dersi olarak okul öncesi eğitime giriş ve erken çocuklukta gelişim derslerini belirtmişlerdir.

Bu sonuçlar eğitim fakülteleri tarafından yapılandırılacak okul öncesi öğretmenliği lisans programlarında göz önünde bulundurulmalı ve en fazla yarar sağlayan derslere yönelik hem ders içeriğinin iyileştirilmesi hem de süresinin artırılarak bu derslerden verimin en üst seviye çıkarılması ve aynı zamanda öğretmen yeterlikleri ile ilişkilendirilecek şekilde derslerin yapılandırılmaları önerilmektedir. Bulgulara göre öğretmen adaylarının cinsiyeti, akademik başarıları ve mezun oldukları lise türleri derslere yönelik bakış açılarında bir farklılık oluşturmamaktadır. Bu bulgunun önemli olduğu düşünülmektedir çünkü demografik özellikler fark etmeksizin tüm öğretmen adaylarının etkili ve etkisiz dersler üzerinde görüş birliğinin olması bu derslerin kaldırılması veya daha üst seviyede verilmesi bakımından önemli bir gösterge olduğu düşünülmektedir.

Her bilimsel çalışmada olduğu gibi bu çalışmada da bazı sınırlılıklar mevcut olup sonuçların bu sınırlılıklar üzerinden değerlendirilmesi gerekmektedir. Türk Eğitim Sistemi ve Okul Yönetimi bazı lisans programlarında zorunlu bazılarında seçmeli olarak verildiği için ÖMB dersleri arasında verilmemiştir. Ölçekleme çalışmaları genellikle 8-10'lu sıralamalar şeklinde yapılmakta daha fazla sayılarda yapılan ölçeklemelerin güvenirliği düşmektedir. Bu çalışmada da GK ve ÖMB bilgisi dersleri V. Hal üzerinden ölçeklenirken A ve AE dersleri III. Hal üzerinden ölçeklenmiştir. Bu bağlamda A ve AE derslerinin sıralamalarında hata payı daha yüksek olabilir. Bu nedenle bu gruba yönelik sıralamaların da dikkatli değerlendirilmesi önerilmektedir. Ayrıca bu çalışma sadece devlet üniversitelerinde okuyan öğrencileri kapsamaktadır ve vakıf öğrencilerinin görüşleri çalışmada yer almamıştır.

Öğrenciler, program geliştirme çalışmalarının önemli paydaşlarıdır ve bu çalışma, daha iyi öğretmen yetiştirme programları için erken çocukluk öğretmen adaylarının ulusal ölçekte sesini duyurmaya çalışmıştır.

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Conflict of Interest

This research has been planned and conducted by the authors. There was no contribution from other people or the organizations that could create a conflict of interest.