



## Early Childhood Pre-service Teachers' Views about Visual Arts Education and Aesthetics\*

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### ABSTRACT

**Purpose:** Pre-service teachers start their university study with only a limited knowledge of art and aesthetics. Early childhood pre-service teachers should be equipped with visual arts education and aesthetics so they will be able to direct artistic activities. Elective courses about art and aesthetics raise pre-service teachers' awareness of these subjects and prepare them to lead children in qualified activities. This research aimed to compare the thoughts, expectations and experiences about the process of practicing art activities amongst early childhood junior and senior pre-service teachers.

**Research Methods:** Phenomenology was used in this qualitative study. The participants included juniors and seniors enrolled in the Early Childhood Education Program. For each group, ten students were included. Seniors had taken elective courses in visual arts education and aesthetics. Two focus group interviews were conducted at the end of the spring semester. The content analysis was used for data analysis.

**Findings:** The findings were grouped under four themes: definition of visual arts education and aesthetics, their content, experiences related to them, and visual arts education in children's lives. According to the findings, seniors' responses had deeper meanings about visual arts education and aesthetics compared to the responses of the juniors. It was discovered that juniors have very limited experience of the subject.

**Implications for Research and Practice:** In this study, elective courses in art and aesthetics raise early childhood pre-service teachers' awareness of visual arts education and aesthetics, and contribute to them leading appropriate activities. These findings suggest that these courses have enriched pre-service teachers' background. Future research could discuss the effects of such courses on classroom teaching and learning.

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## Introduction

The early childhood education classroom could be approached as an important environment providing an aesthetic perspective for children. They are surrounded by objects and an environment that have a rich visual quality. Together with the sights and sounds, the children experience them in what has been called an aesthetic, creating deep feeling (Flannery, 1977). In such an aesthetic environment, visual arts and aesthetics education involves activities for high quality art (Eckhoff, 2008). The skill to evaluate aesthetic art works is defined (Feeney & Moravcik, 1987) as an awareness of satisfying emotional experiences and knowledge of the value of these experiences for the children (Reber, Schwarz & Winkielman, 2004). Early art and aesthetic experiences provide an environment in which children learn to appreciate beauty, to express themselves, to develop their creativity, and to use their imagination. Moreover, adult intervention, adequate space and time are all necessary for children to perform qualified art and aesthetics activities (Bruce, 1998). The role of an early childhood teacher, as one of the most important adult figures during the early years, is great (Cutcher & Boyd, 2016; Kalburan, 2012; Özkan & Girgin, 2014). The influence of early childhood teachers includes their status as role models, source providers, and facilitators for the visual arts and aesthetics. In this context, children need teachers for effective guidance.

For early childhood pre-service teachers to have knowledge of the visual arts and aesthetics education and the ability to lead appropriate practices is considered a learning outcome. When pre-service teacher education is evaluated, it must be remembered that, except for a couple of high schools, art classes are an elective in middle high schools (Altuner, 2007). Acer (2011) has stated that the Material Development course has increased pre-service teachers' abilities to criticize and view art, work individually, learn different techniques, learn how to use the materials in education, see through different eyes and design creative products using scrap materials. Furthermore, Ercivan Zencirci (2012) has revealed that pre-service teachers, in addition to creating art products with scrap materials, acquire skills in this subject and become capable of supporting children's psychological and physical development through this practice. In this context, the more experience they have, the more awareness they will have. Hereby, these early childhood pre-service teachers will be competent educators for visual arts and aesthetics education in children's early years of schooling.

The views related to visual arts and aesthetics education in the early years have changed over the years. As the essentials of children's engagement with art are discussed, intellectual changes are transforming the teacher's responsibilities as well. In this context, diversity in the approaches towards art education has increased (Fox & Schirmacher, 2014; Terenni, 2010). Today, a view defending children's own intellectual structure from being degraded is supported more and more. According to this view, creativity is developed spontaneously during childhood, and this development must not be interrupted (Wright, 2003). Too much guidance or help from teachers may hinder children's creativity. The fact that the adult becomes a model may be disappointing since the abilities of children are not suitable for

repeating what their teacher shows them. Similarly, Lowenfeld and Brittain (1970) locate children's feelings and creativity at the core of artistic study by respecting their creativity. Thus, when proper conditions are presented to children by keeping them away from the models, the artist living in the spirit of every child will be released. One view opposing this view is that children are inarticulate, and the teacher's duty is to civilize them. Yet, according to Bresler (1998), few children in a classroom that is under tight control can perform inventive art activities. Furthermore, Wright (2003) argues that the art education in which teachers give many instructions to children is not a proper experience. Education should continue by giving the responsibility of an artist to children in a process that a child is capable of producing. Fox and Schirmacher (2014) have stated that children can have their first opportunity to learn what to do and which materials to use by way of art experiences. In this context, a teacher can support them to produce visual arts and aesthetic works by creating a positive atmosphere in the classroom. Another view on art education is that it is supposed to be dependent on activities appropriate to a child's developmental stages (Wright, 2003). In fact, the process in which materials suitable to those developmental levels and the lives of the children are presented has its supporters (Bresler, 1998). Thus, implementation of art education by discovering, finding out, forming and constructing with the notion that independence and entertainment are at the core of childhood aesthetic learning has been claimed to be a sensible approach (Fox & Schirmacher, 2014; Wright, 2003). This underlines the importance of art education for early childhood education.

As suggested above, serious dilemmas and different opinions have arisen among researchers about visual arts and aesthetics education. However, if children are kept away from any models to inspire them, the content of art education supporting children's aesthetic development and participation in art activities may become insufficient (Lowenfeld & Brittain, 1970). It is necessary to be brave to teach art techniques and to improve children's skills because art is a distinctive discipline having its own language that can make communication meaningful. The visual arts support creativity and aesthetic values in children by presenting different techniques and methods (Ercivan Zencirci, 2012). Fox and Schirmacher (2014) have stated that children cannot create something from nothing. Furthermore, research has shown that activities enrich the world of children, improve their creative and artistic skills, and help their aesthetic perception and their view toward the world progress positively (Alekseevaa, Shkolyara & Savenkova, 2016). From this point of view, teachers must be aware of the importance of visual arts and aesthetics.

Among the duties of a teacher is the need to present rich experiences, proven materials, visual stimuli and opportunities. It is vital that teachers must have developed their own notions about the meaning of the visual arts and aesthetics first. This will allow them to have a viewpoint concerning the question "What should art be?" (Twigg & Garvis, 2010; Wright, 2003) and because of this viewpoint to consciously apply art education. Bresler (1998) emphasizes that it is imperative to impress children with the importance of the aesthetic experience, finding meaning in and interpreting art education. The teacher education process should raise pre-

service teachers' awareness, lead to a restructuring of their knowledge, remove any trace of the feeling that being connected to art is a threatening factor and make them feel confident and comfortable (Frawley, 2013). All of these points show that the key point is that teachers must have qualifications.

Teachers are expected to conduct effective visual arts and aesthetics activities. On the other hand, it has been observed that there are tasks related to painting, cutting and pasting in visual arts activities in early childhood education in Turkey (Özkan & Girgin, 2014). It is also well known that these activities are too limited. The most basic reason for this situation is that personal experience in art affects the quality of art education, positively or negatively (Power & Klopper, 2011). Hudson and Hudson (2007) think that pre-service teachers should be equipped with effective teaching for providing a qualified visual arts and aesthetics education. Frawley (2013) claims that changing the power of art increases teachers' awareness of the importance of art. According to one researcher, an early childhood teacher education program should provide enough knowledge, show a method to improve the various skills of children, and make the teachers confident to provide art education (Bae, 2004). The content of art education courses in universities must be enriched and the findings are to be discussed in the literature for qualified art and aesthetic practices.

The education that pre-service teachers receive before entering university is not adequate because the previous courses they take in primary and secondary education are insufficient in terms of quality and quantity. This situation increases the need to provide a high quality visual arts and aesthetics education to early childhood teachers. In this context, education courses in the universities definitely need to be enriched (Acer, 2011). It must be of critical importance to determine which educational techniques will increase vocational development that motivates teachers to work with materials and concepts that widen their repertoire and to specify the effects of these techniques (Mages, 2016). The aim of this study is to compare the thoughts, expectations and experiences related to the process of practicing art activities among early childhood pre-service teachers who have taken elective courses as opposed to those who did not have elective courses on art and aesthetics.

## Method

### *Research Design*

Phenomenology has been used in this qualitative research. The aim was to discover the meaning of the experiences that different individuals have gained through phenomenological research (Creswell, 2013; Husserl, 2012). In this study, the pre-service teachers' thoughts about the importance of the visual arts and aesthetics education and their experience related to the elective courses were examined. The importance of data gathering of the pre-service teachers' thoughts in the qualitative research has increased (Nderu-Boddington, 2008). Hereby, the personal experiences of pre-service teachers will be captured to understand the place of visual arts and aesthetics in the teacher education program.

### *Participants*

Participants in the study consisted of 10 junior students and 10 senior students in the Early Childhood Education program at Ege University in İzmir, Turkey. The ten junior participants all volunteered for the study. These juniors had not taken any courses in the visual arts and aesthetics in the Early Childhood Education Teacher Education Program. Since this research aimed at finding out the difference brought about through the elective courses related to art and aesthetics for pre-service teachers, the second group was selected from the senior pre-service teachers who had taken visual arts and aesthetics courses. For this reason, the second group was composed of senior pre-service teachers who had taken Visual Arts Education and two elective courses of Art Development in Children and Creativity and Art Education in Childhood. Each group comprised one male and nine females. While the mean age of the junior pre-service teachers was 18, the mean age of the senior pre-service teachers was 21.

### *Course Information*

The two elective courses of Art Development in Children and Creativity and Art Education in Childhood were offered by one of the authors of this study, and the other author served as a research assistant in these courses. Art Development in Children meets two hours a week during fall semester, while Creativity and Art Education in Childhood is a two hour a week course in the spring semester. For each lesson, theoretical information about the courses is provided in the first four weeks. In the remaining 10 weeks, early childhood pre-service teachers work on their own creations with the perspectives of visual arts and aesthetics. During the creation weeks, the authors, as the course instructors, proceed to give theoretical information and feedback concerning the students' creations.

### *Research Instrument and Procedures*

Focus group interviews were conducted with the early childhood pre-service teachers. The reason for the focus group interviews was to create a discussion environment. Hereby, participants had similar backgrounds and this similarity provides a chance to share their experiences by discussing the advantages and disadvantages of them. The researchers had studied the literature about art and teaching methods. In the direction of the literature, draft questions were formed by the researchers and a questionnaire was evaluated by an expert working in the Early Childhood Education Department.

After expert opinion, face validity was conducted. In this context, the interview form used in the focus group was revised as the final version and then the interview was performed. The interview form included 11 questions under three different subheadings: definitions of visual arts education and aesthetics, contents of such courses, and experiences. Since the participants of the study included two groups, the focus group interviews were held as two independent sessions at the end of the spring semester of the 2015-2016 academic year.

*Data Analysis*

Content analysis was used. In this process, the following steps were executed: preliminary preparation, qualitative data coding, identifying themes, interpreting the findings and reporting the findings. The interview sessions, each lasting about 90 minutes, were conducted by the researchers and an audio recording was made. The researchers tried to create an intimate and comfortable atmosphere for the participants.

Interview proceedings were transferred into written form. These written data were read over by the researchers. The aim was to agree on themes defining the experience of the participants by identifying the problems and patterns in the data (Westman & Bergmark, 2014). It was tried to make a common definition by reaching beyond the personal experience of the pre-service teachers. Researchers formed thematic codes by analyzing the data separately. Similar data in the content analysis method were gathered into specified concepts and themes, and interpreted in a way for readers to understand easily (Yildirim & Simsek, 2004). For this reason, the researchers used thematic codes to group similar data collected for this study.

*Trustworthiness*

The researchers did not expect to find a single, simple truth, since the aim is not to produce a generalization in qualitative research. On the other hand, some measures are needed to enable reliability and validity. It is important that the findings are correct, that is, that the research is valid (LeCompte & Goetz, 1982). In this research, the literature was considered as a basic source. Additionally, the data were categorized by eliminating the discrepancies. Expert opinion was consulted from the beginning of the planning so the research could reach valid findings. In particular, expert opinion during the preparation of the questionnaire was consulted to help finalize the questions. The other measures were to identify the research process in a detailed way, to compare the findings with the literature and to share the participants' answers directly. This procedure also increased the reliability of the findings. Moreover, the findings were explored separately by the researchers. Later, these analyses were compared and calculated by using an inter-rater reliability formula and were found to be 89% compatible. All data have been archived for the reliability of the study. The last two factors to increase the reliability of the research were that the analysis process was explained and the researchers have tried to be objective.

For ethical considerations, permission for conducting the study was obtained, and the informed consent form was prepared for the participants. The process was explained to the pre-service teachers, and the informed consent forms were handed out. The pre-service teachers signed the forms and returned them. Before the focus group study, their permission was taken for sound recording to prevent any potential data loss. All participants gave their permission for the sound recording. Even though the interviews were conducted at the end of the semester, authors did not give any promises about grading for participation in the study.

## Results

This research aims to compare the thoughts, expectations and experiences related to the process of practicing activities about art and aesthetics of the early childhood junior and senior pre-service teachers. The findings of the research have been compiled under four themes: definition of visual arts education and aesthetics, their contents, the experience of pre-service teachers and the place of art in the lives of children. These themes, which emerged from focus group interviews, are presented with early childhood pre-service teachers' explanatory statements. The findings are given by comparing within each theme. The quotations of the participants were coded in terms of the groups. To illustrate, at the end of the quotation by the fifth participant from the junior group, the code designation J5 is used.

### *The Definition of Visual Arts Education and Aesthetics*

Three questions were asked to guide the pre-service teachers' in defining visual arts education and aesthetics. These questions dealt with the definition of visual art education, the description of aesthetics and the meaning of aesthetics for children. It transpired that the seniors defined aesthetics and art education by using more expressions than the juniors. The juniors employed these themes in their definition: the imagination of children, their art objects, the presentation of visual materials, the children's view of art, freedom and limitation, and gaining the skill of self-expression. On the other hand, the seniors developed the following themes: activities enabling children to think differently, the use of natural, creative and unstructured/open-ended material, the inclusion of families, the importance of applying different branches of art and the awareness of the emotions with which children infuse their art objects.

When a child looks at an art object – for example a painting, we can teach him/her how to evaluate it. (J2)

When we give crayons to a child, we do a great opportunity for providing an environment in which the child externalizes his/her inner world. (J4)

We should give unstructured/open-ended materials and completely leave the creative process up to the child. We must do activities that will enable children to use their imaginations and produce different and creative art objects. (S3)

Maybe, a child has a skill that she or he is not aware of. As a teacher, we should work on his/her potential by giving different stimuli. (S5)

The juniors described aesthetics as everything that is beautiful, interesting and colorful for a child. The seniors used different definitions. They have inquired into the meaning of aesthetics from the views of children and concluded that everything that is beautiful and merits praise means aesthetics for children.

Everything, which children see as beautiful, is aesthetic. (J1)

If children are praised for what they do, this is aesthetic. (S2)

*The Contents of Visual Arts Education and Aesthetics*

The second emerging theme from the focus group interviews was related to the contents of visual arts education and aesthetics. This theme included answers for these three questions: What should a visual arts education should be like for children?, Does the 2013 Preschool Education Program include visual arts education and aesthetics?, and If it does not, what would you do to further visual arts and aesthetics education? Providing visual materials, child-centered education, being multidirectional, and art sightseeing themes were common responses for both groups. In particular, the juniors talked about the themes of the importance of art, about granting the children freedom, the art education process, the inclusion of family and being attractive. On the other hand, the seniors made statements based on unique children's products in different art places.

When we hang their paintings on the wall, children become more motivated the following week. Children need to express themselves as well. (J5)

They use the same materials in their schools, whereas the materials that they have never seen before may motivate them more. Different branches of art may be introduced. For example, they can be taken to watch a ballet. (S1)

Yet, when early childhood pre-service teachers were requested to discuss the content of art and aesthetics in the context of the Early Childhood Education Program, only the vocational high school graduates of the junior group knew the programme. To the contrary of this group; the senior group has argued that Early Childhood Education Program is flexible, sufficient and has few details, but preschool teachers prefer stereotyped activities. Furthermore, they have added that implication and elaboration of the programme has been left to teachers.

When I look at the program, I can see that there are more points about arts and children when compared to the previous program. (J1)

In all the schools I visited, I saw teachers applying stereotyped activities. Before anything else is tried, the way of teachers' thinking should be changed. (S8)

Under the content title, early childhood pre-service teachers have been asked what they plan to do about these subjects. It was discovered that the juniors talked about the daily schedule without mentioning art and aesthetics. On the other hand, it was noticed that the seniors were ready to use different techniques for art and aesthetics. It was apparent that early childhood pre-service teachers have quite rich notions, such as using visuals, using a mascot as a "classroom artist", drama, teaching how to think like an artist and to reflect their inner world, and taking support from the artists.

*Participants' Experiences of the Visual Arts Education and Aesthetics*

The third theme was pre-service teachers' experiences of the visual arts education and aesthetics. The answers for three different questions emerged from this theme: whether they use activities related to the visual arts and aesthetics or not; what the



advantages of the courses are; and what experiences they have about the visual arts and aesthetics. It was revealed that the juniors have had only limited experience in the visual arts, such as the Turkish Education Volunteer Foundation and the technology design course in the middle high schools.

We were preparing art homework while watching TV one day before handing in the homework. (J2)

I really wanted to do drawing, but I lost my interest since my teacher was not interested. (J4)

We had our annual exhibition. Most of the people in the town had visited the exhibition and seen my art work, which I was proud of. (J9)

On the other hand, the seniors mentioned ebru art (paper marbling) and the artworks of the artists, collage, and project works. The same group emphasized the positive and negative points of visual arts education and aesthetics courses in the university. This attitude of pre-service teachers supports the hypothesis that activates critical thinking skills by way of those courses. Early childhood pre-service teachers have decided that to be interested in art, to utilize natural material, to gain experience are the positive sides, while the inability to involve children in art, to feel under stress to prepare the product in time and to be evaluated by a point system are the negative sides.

I did not see these courses as normal courses because I attended them for fun, doing something, reducing my stress level, and being interested in the arts. (S8)

The seniors stated that they met some constraints on the visual arts education in their practice. These constraints were practicing art activities just one day a week, classroom teachers' resistance, directors' and parents' underestimation of art products, the overpopulation of classrooms and performing stereotyped art activities. An example of the statements is this one from a senior participant:

My biggest problem was the overcrowded classroom. I tried to reach all 27 children, but I failed. (S10)

#### *The Aesthetics and Visual Arts Education in Children's Lives*

The last theme was the place of aesthetics and visual arts education in children's lives. Pre-service teachers' statements about two different questions were grouped under this last theme. These questions were What are the advantages of visual art education for children? and What is the place of aesthetics in a child's life and education? Similarly, both groups have expressed their thoughts about this subject with the terms of common themes: improving the imagination, teaching different points of view, and forming a base. For their part, the juniors discussed how art and aesthetics support different developmental areas and provide ways to succeed in what seemed like an impossible task. The seniors stated their thoughts under the themes of supporting creativity and breaking down stereotypes.

A child can do everything that she or he thinks is impossible. For example, if the child is drawing a picture above the clouds, she or he cannot climb up over the clouds without a balloon, but that can be done in the picture. (J10)

Their imagination is so powerful that they produce many things in their minds. Maybe he does not have material to make it or somebody to guide him. He can turn it into reality thanks to art education. (S6)

Furthermore, the juniors expressed that aesthetics in a child's life is something that is missed, something that have chosen freely and a basis for their future life. Similarly, the seniors stated that aesthetics is something that is interested and a basis for future life. Yet, different from those views, it has been noticed that unique themes emerged, such as teaching how to see differently, working individually with a student and seizing the importance of his own thoughts.

We should teach arts and aesthetics, and there is no right or wrong in art. Then, I am sure, it will be beneficial for future life. (S7)

### **Discussion and Conclusion**

In this study, the aim was to compare the thoughts, expectations and experiences of the process of practicing art activities of early childhood among junior and senior pre-service teachers. In this part of the study, the results are discussed in light of the literature on the subject. Research studies have revealed that art education is effective in improving reading and comprehension skills (Gravalin & Maki, 2013), increasing student creativity (Nderu-Boddington, 2008), contributing to the development of thinking skills and aesthetic sensitivity, and awakening the consciousness of recognizing beauty and protecting it (Sungurtekin & Cakir-Ilhan, 2015; Yazari, Aslan & Sener, 2014). Because of contributions, for an effective art education it is essential to study the contents of the art education, also art education should be given at every level of the education, properly. In a study to define art education in teacher education programs in Greece, it was determined that art education is more theoretical or mechanical in comparison to the other lessons, while its quality is low (Sotiropoulou-Zormpala, Trouli & Linardakis, 2015). The authors stated that diversity in the art disciplines is ignored and the number of compulsory art lessons must be increased. In the current study, seniors similarly criticized the courses they take. Under the experiences about visual arts education and aesthetics, seniors indicated that practicing art activities just one day a week and classroom teachers' resistance to their original work decreased the quality of their activities in the visual arts and aesthetics.

It is important to review the art lessons in education to discuss the results of this study. It is thought that art lessons have not been recognized for their deserved value in the educational system in Turkey (Yazari, Aslan & Sener, 2014). According to Acer (2011), it has been stated that scientific lessons have become more popular and art lessons have become less popular in Turkey, and because of the current education system, early childhood pre-service teachers graduate without enough skills and

have to do art activities with children. Taking art lessons with a wide variety of content in universities and collaborating with professionals who work in different branches of art will eliminate their deficiencies and increase their competencies. On the other hand, Ozkan and Girgin (2014) stated that most of the teachers (88.2%) in their study found art education in the university insufficient. In a similar manner, in this study a pre-service teacher has admitted, "We used to study mathematics in Visual Arts Lessons", a statement that summarizes the situation.

It is essential that art education must be present at every level of the education system in a certified way. Unfortunately, in 2005, the Art History course studied in high schools was converted into an elective lesson in all middle and high schools, except in Anatolian High Schools of Fine Arts. This situation will lead to an increase in the citizens of Turkey lacking even a basic knowledge of art history (Altuner, 2007). It has been deduced that the junior pre-service teachers feel incompetent in art education. The junior group's experience related to aesthetics and the visual arts compared to that of the senior group was limited and this result was an expected finding in the research. When asked what they could do in art activities, it has been concluded from their responses that seniors made more conscious selections concerning the techniques and methods of the daily schedule. In a similar way, Ercivan Zencirci (2012) conducted a study with early childhood pre-service teachers, and used the diversity of materials and techniques in art activities. Furthermore, the results of the study indicated that pre-service teachers used different techniques except for traditional painting applications, and so their awareness and competences in the visual arts and aesthetics had increased.

The development of programs in art education is essential for early childhood education to be applied, but these moves are not enough. The teachers must be trained to have a sensitivity to aesthetics and art consciousness (Acer 2011; Cutcher & Boyd, 2016; Ozkan & Girgin, 2014). In the present study, the seniors admitted that they had met with some difficulties in their practice. The following statement from one of the seniors can serve as an example:

Teachers in the classrooms restricted us while practicing. When I wanted to use different paints, the teacher did not allow me to use paints because she thought the paints would make the tables, chairs and their hands dirty. Also, we had limited time with the children. (S7)

Similarly, the results of another study revealed that newly graduated teachers have some difficulties such as the lack of educational technologies, and inadequate time for art and aesthetics activities. The findings of the present study and of Aykut's (2006) study have made us think that classroom settings and teachers' views towards unique art works must be improved. In other words, the finding of this study shows parallels with what one finds in the literature.

It is recommended that pre-service teachers improve their strategies and techniques, profiting from workshops, courses and visiting artists who will contribute to introducing the richness of art to children. Kalburan (2012) explains that observing architectural designs, researching some branches of art, visiting museums,

galleries and art exhibitions all improve the perspectives of children and educators. Both of our groups in this present study emphasized the necessity to organize visits on field trips, especially to museums. Furthermore, it has been noted that the senior group have put forward these suggestions: using visual materials, using a mascot as a “classroom artist”, requesting professional support, using natural materials and teaching children how to think in an artistic manner and how to reflect their inner world by using art. According to Twigg and Garvis (2010), teachers need to be supported with education related to art in their professional career. Thus, it will be possible to allow children to convert their dreams into practice, to live through perceptual experiences and to find beauty by way of art and aesthetics (Acer, 2015; Barnes, 2002). In this study, it has been determined that early childhood pre-service teachers see art as a way of converting dreams into reality.

A child must have artistic skills to freely express his/her own feelings and thoughts by drawing, painting, and ceramics. To reflect the diversity of the visual arts program in the activities done with children during the education process must be a part of teachers’ responsibilities. In this context, contemporary teachers must be informed about qualified art programs and have a view to make conscious decisions. On the other hand, Ozkan and Girgin (2014) conducted a study with early childhood pre-service teachers, in which pre-service teachers indicated that they believe in the importance of visual art education and its effect on children’s creativity. It has also been thought that early childhood pre-service teachers have similar thoughts. In their research study, Gonen, Aydos and Erdem (2016) determined that pre-service teachers are also aware of the importance of art activities for children. In this present study, the seniors expressed the opinion that art contributes to children’s development.

To conclude, the senior students in our study developed a deeper awareness of the areas of art and aesthetics as well as increased knowledge of how to adapt these issues to early childhood education. Furthermore, they expressed a preference for using natural materials and said they planned to profit from professionals and different art branches while arranging early childhood education classrooms and activities. Additionally, early childhood pre-service teachers discussed the negative points of the visual arts lessons that they had taken, supporting the hypothesis that activates their questioning, evaluation and reasoning processes.

It is hoped that the data from this study will cast some light on how to improve the content of art lessons to be presented to early childhood pre-service teachers. The desire of the pre-service early childhood teachers will collaborate with professionals working in various art branches will be effective in improving the skills they need. Application of different models in collaboration with professionals in studies to be done in the future, monitoring best practices and sharing the findings will contribute to spreading improvements rapidly. In this direction, early childhood pre-service teachers performing unique art practices in the conception of these courses will be likely to bring a different viewpoint to the professional skills of the working teachers. Pre-service teachers who take visual arts and aesthetics courses will be able to apply well-designed art activities to the lessons they teach, so in-service teachers have a

chance to observe these well-designed art activities. In this way, pre-service teachers could be a model for in-service teachers of exciting visual arts and aesthetics practices.

The findings of this study will contribute to the intellectual content of the visual arts and aesthetics education courses in universities. In these course contents, it is important to emphasize the following issues: an art teacher need not be a professional artist but should be a role model for children (Fox & Schirrmacher, 2014, p. 272); teachers should integrate visual arts and aesthetics with the early childhood education program; teachers should increase their awareness of the visual arts and aesthetic education by referring to arts, artists and artistic and aesthetic components; teachers should provide various materials to children to activate their curiosity and creativity; and teachers should use more technology if there is even a limited chance to bring the visual arts and aesthetics into the classroom (Fox & Schirrmacher, 2014, p. 140).

It has been determined that the pre-service teachers expect theories and practice to be executed together and not to be evaluated by grades based on art products. The most basic limitation is that the education given in elective courses does not integrate with practice at an adequate level. The pre-service teachers' viewpoint on art will gain a deeper insight if they find opportunities to try out during practicing what they have learned by taking advantage of theoretically multi-dimensional and multi-directional opportunities. The same research should be done in wider samplings, with various scales, and research designs. Such expansion will contribute to the development of art and aesthetics activities for young children. The elective courses including art techniques and models in early childhood education should be examined with wider samplings to integrate them with practice. A similar longitudinal study may be done to compare the thoughts of the pre-service teachers. In this context, we could suggest that the sample model elective courses with the integration of different art materials and techniques in various art branches should be examined with varied samplings.

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## Okul Öncesi Öğretmen Adaylarının Gözünden Görsel Sanat Eğitimi ve Estetik

### Atıf:

- Bilir-seyhan, G. & Ocak-karabay, S. (2018). Early childhood pre-service teachers’ views about visual arts education and aesthetics. *Eurasian Journal of Educational Research*, 73, 131-148, DOI: 10.14689/ejer.2018.73.8

### Özet

*Problem Durumu:* İlk yıllarda içinde bulunulan sanat etkinlikleri duygusaldır ve çocuklar kendi yaptıkları bu çalışmaların diğerleri üzerindeki etkisinin farkında değildirler. Sanata ilişkin erken yıllarda yaşanan deneyimlerin olumlu ve çocuğun gelişim düzeyine uygun olması çocuklar için keyif verici bir nitelik taşıyacaktır. Çocuklar erken yaşlarda güzelliklerle tanışmazlarsa, gelecek yaşantılarında güzelliği fark etme ve güzelliğe değer verme konularında sorunlar yaşayabileceklerdir. Bu bağlamda, erken dönemde çocukların sanat ve estetik konusunda bilgi sahibi, kendilerini yönlendirecek ve destekleyecek yetişkinlere ihtiyaçları bulunmaktadır. Erken yıllarda çocuklar üzerinde etkisi olan en önemli yetişkinlerden biri okul öncesi



öğretmenleridir. Bu nedenle, okul öncesi öğretmenlerinin lisans eğitimlerinden itibaren sanat ve estetik konularında donanımlı olmaları ve bu konularda nitelikli uygulamalar yapmaları önemli bir kazanım olarak görülmektedir. Ancak öğretmen adayları ilk ve orta öğretim kurumlarında sanat üzerine aldıkları eğitimin yeterli seviyede olmaması nedeniyle üniversiteden alacakları eğitimin niteliğinin artırılmasına gereksinim duymaktadır. Bu bağlamda Okul Öncesi Öğretmenliği lisans programlarında sanat ve estetik konularına yönelik zorunlu seçmeli derslerin çeşitliliği ve işlevselliği öğretmen adaylarına daha fazla deneyim fırsatı sağlayacaktır. Öğretmen adayının resim, müzik, tiyatro, drama, dans gibi sanat dallarından yararlanarak öğrenme ortamını zenginleştirilmesi, çocukları sanat merkezlerine, sergi açılışlarına, müze gezilerine, konserlere götürerek farklı deneyimler yaşamalarına olanak sağlaması ve farklı sanat dallarından sanatçılar (ressamlar, heykeltıraşlar, müzisyenler, grafikerler vb.) ile işbirliği içinde çalışarak çocukların yaşantılarını ve bakış açılarını zenginleştirebilmesinde kritik bir işleve sahip olan söz konusu derslerin içeriklerinin alanda tartışılması, adayların bu derslerle ilişkili görüşlerinin açığa çıkartılması farklı özgün içeriklere sahip sanat derslerinin geliştirilmesi için çeşitli araştırmalara gereksinim duyulmaktadır.

*Araştırmanın Amacı:* Bu çalışma, okul öncesi eğitim programında sanat ve estetik konularında daha fazla sayıda seçmeli ders almış öğretmen adaylarıyla seçmeli ders almamış öğretmen adaylarının görsel sanat eğitimi hakkındaki düşüncelerini, aldıkları derslere ilişkin deneyimlerini ve sanat etkinliklerini uygulama hakkındaki görüşlerini karşılaştırmak amacıyla yürütülmüştür. Alınan geri bildirimlerin söz konusu derslerin eğitim programındaki yerlerinin olumlu ve olumsuz boyutlarının gözden geçirilmesi derslerin yeniden yapılandırılmasına ve gelişmekte olan yeni derslerin içeriklerinin düzenlenmesine düşünsel bir katkı sağlayabilecektir.

*Araştırmanın Yöntemi:* Bu çalışmada, nitel araştırma yöntemlerinde kullanılan desenlerden biri olan fenomenoloji kullanılmıştır. Çalışma grubu, Okul Öncesi Öğretmenliği lisans programında 1.sınıfa ve 4.sınıfa devam eden öğrencilerden belirlenmiş onar öğrenciden oluşmaktadır. Araştırma kapsamında, iki farklı grup öğretmen adayıyla iki farklı oturumda odak grup görüşmeleri yürütülmüştür. Verilerin analizinde içerik analizi yöntemi kullanılmıştır. Bu süreçte, ön hazırlık, nitel verileri kodlama, temalara ulaşma, bulguları yorumlama ve sonuçları raporlaştırma aşamaları izlenmiştir.

*Araştırmanın Bulguları:* Çalışmanın bulguları şu 4 başlık altında incelenmiştir; görsel sanat eğitimi ve estetiğin tanımı, içeriği, deneyimleri ve görsel sanat eğitimin çocukların yaşamındaki yeri. Okul Öncesi Öğretmenliği lisans programında sanat ve estetik konularında seçmeli dersler almış olan öğretmen adaylarının bu dersleri almamış adaylara göre görsel sanat eğitimi ve estetiğe yönelik daha zengin içeriğe sahip tanımlamalarda buldukları saptanmıştır.

İçeriğe yönelik olarak görseller ve materyaller sağlama, çocuğu merkeze alma ve çok yönlü olma ve alan gezileri uygulama temaları iki grup tarafından değinilen ortak temalardır. Ayrıca seçmeli dersleri henüz almamış grubun sanatın önemi, özgürlük sağlama, süreç, aileyi içermeye ve ilgi çekici olma temalarından ifadeler kullanırken

diğer grup sanat eğitiminde farklı mekanlarda özgün çalışmalara yönelik düşünceler açıklamışlardır. Sanat ve estetik ile ilişkili neler yapmayı düşündükleri araştırıldığında seçmeli dersleri henüz almamış grubun okul öncesi eğitimin geneline yönelik günlük eğitim akışlarından bahsettikleri, dersleri alan grubun ise doğrudan bu konular ile ilişkili günlük eğitim akışlarına yönelik teknikler ve yöntemleri düşünsel olarak kullanmayı planladıkları görülmüştür.

Adayların sanat eğitimi ve estetikle ilgili deneyimlerini ortaya çıkarmaya yönelik sorulara verdikleri yanıtlar incelendiğinde seçmeli dersleri henüz almamış grubun çok kısıtlı deneyimlerinin olduğu saptanmıştır. Görsel sanat eğitimi ve estetik konularına yönelik seçmeli dersleri daha yoğun şekilde alan grubun söz konusu dersleri çeşitli açılardan olumlu ve olumsuz yanlarını ortaya koyarak tartıştıkları gözlenmiştir. Sanatla ilgilenmek, doğal materyalleri değerlendirmek, deneyim kazanmak olumlu kazanımlar olarak sıralanırken, çocuklara sınıf ortamında uygulayamamak, ürünlerin notlandırılması ve yetiştirmek için zaman kısıtlılığı nedeniyle baskı hissetmeleri olumsuz unsurlar olarak ortaya konmuştur.

*Araştırmanın Sonuçları ve Önerileri:* Sonuç olarak, sanat ve estetik konularında verilen derslerin okul öncesi öğretmen adaylarının sanata ilişkin farkındalıklarını ve bilgi düzeylerini arttırdığı, uygulama ile ilişkili farklı sanat dallarına yönelik çalışmalar gerçekleştirme konusunda bilinçli bir çaba içinde olmalarına katkıda bulunduğu gözlenmiştir. Odak grup görüşmelerinin kullanılması, öğretmen adaylarının bireysel görüşmelere göre kendilerini daha güvende ve rahat ifade etmelerini sağlamış, seçmeli sanat derslerine yönelik eleştirel görüşlerinin ortaya çıkmasını kolaylaştırmıştır. Bu görüşlerin bundan sonraki çalışmalar için söz konusu derslerin hazırlık aşamasında düşünsel bir katkı sağlayacağı düşünülmektedir. Araştırmada sanat ve estetikle ilgili seçmeli derslerin öğretmen adaylarının bu konulardaki birikimlerini zenginleştirmiş olmasının diğer programlarda da artırılması için bir örnek teşkil edebileceğini düşündürmektedir.

*Anahtar Sözcükler:* Öğretmen eğitimi, sanat ve estetik, erken çocukluk eğitimi, öğretmen adayı, nitel araştırma.