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The views of teachers and managers about art, music and drama activities carried out by in-field-teachers in early childhood education institutions

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Abstract

The purpose of this research is to examine the views of teachers and managers about art, music and drama activities that are carried out by in-field-teachers in early childhood education institutions. In the line of this purpose, semi-structured interview form prepared by the researchers was used for one to one interviews. Quantitative research techniques were used in order to examine the results of the research. Results show that the managers, early childhood educators and in-field-teachers have both positive and negative ideas about field courses which are carried out by the in-field-teachers.

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1. Introduction

It is necessary to make a planning by taking different factors into consideration in order for a quality education that will shape a child's future life (Eliason and Jenkins, 2003). Recently, there have been reformation attempts to improve the qualities of education systems, first and foremost the organizational structure, teaching programs, administrators, teachers and other workers in the field. Studies related to the proficiency of teachers, who are among the most important aspects of the education system, are the basis of these reformation attempts. In this respect, it is seen that there has been a pursuit that aims to increase the quality of teachers in order to enhance the quality of education (Beltekin, 2010). One of the most important attempts with regards to the development and popularization of pre-school education, which influences a child's whole life to a great extent, is to train qualified teachers needed in the field. The aim of Pre-School Education Teacher Training programs is to be able to train teachers who are equipped with field knowledge and skill and are open to self-improvement, who can question, and think, and who are creative and innovative. To this end, there are courses related to arts, music and drama besides courses related to field knowledge and general knowledge in the curricula of pre-school education programs, and in these fields, these programs provide opportunities for prospective teachers to prepare activities that are suitable for children's age and development levels.

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Children may share their emotions, thoughts and desires with others through music, action, drama and art. The role of the teacher during this process is to provide the effective experiences that will help children to gain the trust and skills needed in explaining themselves. Thus, prospective teachers are expected to have trust and skills in art teaching before they start their professional life. Teachers should know their educational aims, they should trust their skills in this field, and they should be aware of the benefits of an effective arts teaching (Senemoğlu, 1994).

One of the areas, which is highly frequently present in education programs, teachers are expected to enrich the process by using the knowledge and skills they have acquired during their education is the music activities. Children usually gain their first formal music experience under the guidance of pre-school teachers. Hence, this music experience they acquire during the first couple of years of their lives leaves an either positive or negative permanent influence. Therefore, the instructor who is going to provide a music education should have a good knowledge and experience of music, and they should try their best to realize the objectives of pre-school music education. If they can play an instrument, that would be even better. Moreover, they should follow a program that is appropriate for the development of children and they should take into consideration the fact that a carefully planned schedule is an important factor for the success of education (Göncü, 2009).

The knowledge, skills, attitudes, and proficiency perceptions of teachers, too, influence to a great extent the quality of drama activities in which children have the chance to express their feelings and thoughts. The teacher is an important part of drama activities. The teacher is a person who plans the behaviors he or she deems necessary for the participant, chooses appropriate drama activities, provides the tools and materials and decided how to evaluate the learning process, encourages group activity as well as individual study, and accepts children's thoughts and provides opportunities for them to express themselves (Karadağ, 2008; Hui, Cheung, Wong, He, 2011).

When the roles teachers shoulder in the arts, music, and drama activities are taken into consideration, which improve a child's creativity and imagination, and which give the child the opportunity to express himself or herself and to have versatile thinking, proficiency perceptions and ideas of teachers on this issue gains even more importance. Thus, the aim of this study is to determine the views of administrators and teachers on the maintenance of drama, arts, and music activities by an in-field-teacher. With this study, the basic aim is to determine the positive and negative aspects of appointing in-field-teachers to drama, arts, and music classes with regards to the institution, the teacher, and the child.

2. Method

2.1. Research Method

This research includes descriptive qualification because of aiming to present the situation as well. In the research, quantitative research method was used.

2.2. Study Group

Research is carried out with 10 managers, 10 early childhood educators and 10 branch teachers (art, music and drama) who were graduated from different universities in Turkey and working in different early childhood education center and vary of professional experiences between 0-10 years.

2.3. Collection of Data and Analyze

Semi Structured Interview Form was developed to be used in this research. Descriptive analyze method was used in order to analyze the data. In this research, findings were organized and described in the direction of themes that are determined by the researchers. Because of the aim of reflecting ideas of individuals, the ideas of teachers are often supported by quotations. In order to provide reliability of the research, data are coded and analyzed different researchers separately and individually.

3. Findings and Commentary

In this part of the study, after asking pre-school teachers, in-field-teachers, and school administrators their views related to in-field-teachers' carrying out the arts, drama and music activities in pre-school education institutions,

findings related to whether pre-school teachers feel adequate about carrying out these activities are given. Views of pre-school teachers related to in-field-teachers' carrying out the art, drama, and music activities are given in Table1.

Table 1. Views of early childhood educators about the art, music and drama activities carried out by in-field-teachers

	f
Positive Aspects (Advantages)	
Having more theoretic knowledge in related areas (art, music and drama)	7
Preparing more activities in terms of number and varieties	7
Giving opportunities to more people in order to evaluate the child	1
Decreasing workload of early childhood educators	5
Providing time to early childhood educators	3
Increasing the corporation between teachers who are in different areas	1
Negative Aspects (Disadvantages)	
Unable to recognize the children enough	8
Planning the activities that are unsuitable for the ages and development characteristics of the children	7
Unable to provide collaboration with the curriculum	4
High costs	1
Being constant times of branch courses /affecting the flexibility of curriculum	2
Unable to feel belonging to the class	1

When Table 1 is examined, it can be seen that most of the pre-school teachers (7 teachers) have indicated that in-field teachers have more theoretical knowledge and practical skills related to their fields (arts, music, drama). Views of the 3rd participants are as follows:

“Especially in arts and music activities, I cannot produce much. I constantly repeat myself. I am of the opinion that in-field-teachers have more knowledge on this issue. For example, I have difficulty during music activities, because we have not been taught a few songs and playing the flute in music classes.”

In her study, in which a comparison between the attitudes and proficiencies of music and pre-school teachers working at pre-school education institutions towards music activities were given, Goncu (2009) contended that although the qualities of pre-school teachers related to pre-school child development are adequate, they cannot be as adequate in music activities due to the deficiencies in their music knowledge. In another study conducted by Eldemir et al (2009), it was reported that pre-school teachers do not feel proficient in terms of the Orff method or that they cannot adequately use their knowledge related to this method in their professional lives. Findings in this study also show that pre-school teachers feel inadequate in applying these activities. This feeling of inadequacy may be the resulting from the quality of the arts, music, and drama classes they took during their undergraduate studies; or it may also be resulting from the possibility that they do not try hard enough for self-improvement in these fields.

When listing the negative aspects of the carrying out of arts, music, and drama activities by in-field-teachers, pre-school teachers indicated first and foremost the problems related to not knowing children or their developmental qualities. The views of the 2nd and 5th participants on this issue are as follows:

“Because we know the children better than the in-field-teachers, we have a better understanding of their likes and dislikes or how they can learn more easily. In-field-teachers try to conduct activities that are way above children’s levels, and children fail to succeed.”

“Sometimes we do not get along well with the in-field-teachers. For example, while we work on a song about “professions” with children, the arts teacher may want children to draw pictures about the space and the sky during that week’s art activity. When this is the case, we have a problem; the program cannot be maintained properly. Because they have difficulty in relating to children, children can get distracted easily.”

Although in-field-teachers have adequate knowledge in their fields, their not having enough knowledge on the qualities and education of pre-school children presents itself as a problem, and it is thought that this

may be resulting from the fact that there are no classes related to pre-school education in their undergraduate curricula. Moreover, this may be resulting from the quality of the drama classes in teacher-training programs, or the fact that the certificate programs, which aim to train drama leaders, are inadequate in providing studies on pre-school education. When the 2009 “Curricula of Higher Education Institutions” is examined, it can be seen that there is no institution or department that solely focuses on training “Pre-School Music Instructors” in Turkey. Moreover, neither in music education departments nor in conservatories are there courses that cover pre-school education or child development related to pre-school music education (Goncu, 2009).

The views of in-field-teachers on the carrying out of arts, music, and drama activities by in-field-teachers are given in Table 2.

Table 2. Views of in-field-teachers about the art, music and drama activities carried out by in-field-teachers

	f
Positive Aspects (Advantages)	
Having more theoretic knowledge in related areas (art, music and drama)	8
Preparing more activities in terms of number and varieties	9
Able to recognize the abilities in early ages and able to direct in a suitable manner	6
Giving opportunities to more people in order to evaluate the child	3
Able to develop different perspectives in children	2
Providing time to early childhood educators	4
Increasing the collaboration between teachers who are in different areas	4
Increase in satisfaction of parents	3
Negative Aspects (Disadvantages)	
Unable to recognize the children enough	4
Unable to come to agreement with early childhood educators	2
Increase in interest of early childhood educators related to the branch courses	3

According to Table 2, in-field-teachers explained the positive aspects of the carrying out of these activities by themselves similar to the expressions used by pre-school teachers. In addition to the expressions given in Table 1, in-field-teachers indicated that as field experts they can detect talent in early ages, and that children develop their communication skills by interacting with different teachers, and that parents are content with this. The views of the 11th participant on this issue are as follows:

“I think I have more mastery in my field than a pre-school teacher. I can teach children songs by playing the piano, the violin, the organ, or the drums. Playing the piano with a music teacher or painting with an arts teacher can be fun and different for children.”

In-field-teachers who participated in this study expressed that they are more effective in developing various creative activities and using different methods in order to apply these activities. This may be resulting from the fact that there is not enough room for activities related to the application of field courses in pre-school education programs, or that field knowledge was given to those who graduate from related fields in such a way so that their field knowledge meets the requirements.

The negative aspect of the carrying out of arts, music, and drama activities by in-field-teachers was expressed by the 16th participant as follows:

“I would like to talk about problems we have with teachers rather than with children. During the time of our activities, pre-school teachers leave us alone with the children. I think this is why they cannot improve themselves in terms of arts, music, and drama, and they forget their already existing knowledge on the issue.

The fact that in-field-teachers have limited time with children can be the reason for their lack of enough knowledge of children, or the problems they face in terms of class management or communication. Moreover, pre-school teachers do not work collaboratively with in-field-teachers, and they do not participate in the process; all of these bring forth the possibility that their knowledge and interest in this field decreases.

The views of administrators on the carrying out of arts, music, and drama activities by in-field-teachers are given in Table 3.

Table 3. Views of managers about the art, music and drama activities carried out by in-field-teachers

Groups	f
Positive Aspects (Advantages)	
Having more theoretic knowledge in related areas (art, music and drama)	7
Preparing more activities in terms of number and varieties	5
Increasing the collaboration between teachers who are in different areas	4
Able to recognize the abilities in early ages and able to direct in a suitable manner	3
Receiving the demands of parents	5
Increase in satisfaction of parents	6
Using in advertisement of school	3
Negative Aspects (Disadvantages)	
Planning the activities that are unsuitable for the ages and development characteristics of the children	2
High costs	4
Unable to feel belonging to the class	1

When Table 3 is examined, it can be seen that administrators working in pre-school education institutions the positive aspects of the carrying out of the arts, music and drama activities by in-field-teachers similar to the expressions used by pre-school teachers and in-field-teachers. School administrators also emphasized the demands of parents in explaining the positive aspects of the carrying out of these activities. The views of the 24th participant on this issue are as follows:

“I don’t think pre-school teachers can be experts on every field. Parents also demand that arts, music, and drama activities should be carried out by field experts. Sometimes, they even ask whether such activities are carried out even before I start talking about these activities. In the final analysis, this is a beneficial practice both for the promotion of the school and for the child and the family.

The negative aspect of the carrying out of arts, music, and drama activities by in-field-teachers were given by the 27th and 30th participants as follows:

“The fact that in-field-teachers have not been trained in terms of pre-school education and that they have not improved themselves in this field may cause problems. For example, assuming that drama activities are equated to theatre, they may limit themselves to staging a play and presenting it to an audience, or limit arts activities solely to teaching drawing techniques.”

“If your school is not part of an elementary school, appointing an in-field-teacher is an additional cost. Moreover, if you work in a small town, you may have difficulty finding in-field-teachers.”

Within the scope of the study, both the in-field-teachers and pre-school teachers were asked whether they feel proficient in carrying out the arts, music, and drama activities. 6 pre-school teachers and 3 in-field-teachers expressed that they find themselves inadequate in carrying out these activities. Pre-school teachers indicated that the education they had in these fields were inadequate, and in-field-teachers expressed that due to their inadequate knowledge in terms of child development and child education, they faced problems especially in terms of class management and communication with children.

4. Conclusion and Suggestions

In this study, it was determined that the participants had both positive and negative views on the carrying out of arts, drama, and music activities in pre-school education institutions by in-field-teachers. The positive aspects of the issue are: in-field-teachers have more theoretical knowledge about the field (arts, drama, and music), they can prepare more and varied activities, having in-field-teachers makes it possible for the child to be evaluated by

multiple people, it lightens the workload of pre-school teachers, it creates time for pre-school teachers, it increases the collaboration between teachers from different fields, it enables children's talents to be recognized at an early age so that they can be properly directed, it enables the development of different viewpoints in children, it meets parents' expectations, it increases parents' satisfaction, and it can be used in the PR of the school. Attendants have stated that when the branch teachers carry out these activities, they cannot recognize the children enough and cannot feel belonging to the class, cannot plan the activities that are suitable for the age and development characteristics of the children, cannot provide integrity with the curriculum, high costs, they cannot provide the flexibility in daily plan, decrease in early childhood educators' interest and problems related with negotiation with early childhood educator.

In the direction of research results, these suggestions are brought forward. In early childhood education bachelor's degree, the content and application of branch courses should be reviewed again and enhanced. Course content of bachelor's degree programs that train specialist in art and music areas and certificate programs that train drama leadership courses and applications should be added related to child development and education issues. Students who carry out education at bachelor's degree related to art and music areas, in the light of their interest, 'art studies in early childhood period' or 'music education in early childhood period' areas can be arranged and throughout the importance and development of these activities, planning of in-service training educations can be suggested. Rather than early childhood educators' and branch teachers' working independently, arrangements should provide the activities to be collaborative in planning and application.

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